

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.13



In every issue of this wonderful publication, we read about how people with power abuse those without power. Yes, it could be the police or the DA or the PO or the judge. But it could also be the OG, the Big Homie, the dealer with the fattest car. It could be a teacher, or a father. It could be the President of the United States.

But we have also learned the lesson that individual people can make a difference, can change the world. Rosa Parks, when told to move to the back of the bus in 1955, did one of the most courageous things an individual can do. She said, "No." Maybe this is what they mean when they say, "Speaking truth to power." And who was Rosa Parks? Just an ordinary person, a woman with no special powers, no special protections. Just a person, like you.

One of our own Beat facilitators — one of the oldest — was able to speak truth to power, and he's written about it. Back in 1980, before most of you were born, the government decided to build a prison that was not on anyone's drawing board because they needed a place to house Olympic athletes from around the world. First it was an Olympic Village, complete with shops and theaters and all kinds of goodies. And then, once the athletes went back to Europe, it became a prison, stripped clean and left cold and gray. At that time, our colleague was the director of an organization in Washington, D.C. with the name, the National Moratorium on Prison Construction. He and his colleagues immediately saw the human rights' violation that this prison represented, and he went so far as to go to jail to protest.

The piece we're about to share was written by Michael Kroll (who facilitates in San Francisco's Juvenile Justice Center and San Mateo's Juvenile Hall). On Monday, March 31, the San Francisco Chronicle published his piece (Section B5) in a slightly edited form, but we want to show you the piece as he originally wrote it as a reminder that you possess the same power that he possessed (and still possesses), the power to say "No."

Protesting the Olympic Torch By Michael A. Kroll

The hoopla in San Francisco surrounding the forthcoming Olympic Torch runner and the promised demonstrations focused on China's human rights' abuses reminded me of an earlier Olympic protest against human rights abuses — except those abuses were far closer to home.

In 1980, the Winter Olympics were held in Lake Placid, New York. As the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) contemplated housing the large number of (mostly white) athletes who would be descending on the tiny Alpine village, they went to Congress asking for federal money to build temporary quarters. Congress responded that the federal government was not in the business of providing public money for private enterprises (we weren't East Germany, after all), and advised that if the Committee could suggest a permanent public after-use, then the money might be forthcoming.

In record time — working closely with the Federal Bureau of Prisons — the USOC came up with their suggested "public" after-use: a new federal prison. Without the Congressional oversight that had always been required for such a massive project, Congress appropriated the money, borrowed a blueprint from an existing federal prison complex, clear cut a large swath of forest between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake, and construction began.

At that time, I coordinated a project headquartered in Washington, D.C. called the National Moratorium on Prison Construction (with our West Coast office in San Francisco). Along with affiliate groups in New York, we launched a campaign to focus attention on the irony and inhumanity of U.S. tax dollars to pay for an "Olympic Village" — complete with discothèque, movie theater, fancy food services and many other amenities — for the 1100, mostly white, European athletes who would first occupy the village temporarily, only to be followed by its more permanent residents, young, mostly black and Latino men from the urban centers of New York City and Philadelphia who would be imprisoned there, once the complex was stripped of all the warm trappings of celebrity and left barren and cold.

We called our campaign Stop The Olympic Prison, which made a convenient acronym: S.T.O.P., and we designed a brilliantly colored poster showing a black arm thrust through the Olympic rings under the slogan, Stop The Olympic Prison (<http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/STOP/STOR.html>).

Soon, we received a letter from the USOC threatening to sue us for copyright infringement if we did not "cease and desist." Far from ceasing and desisting, we launched our own pre-emptive strike: we sued the USOC ourselves for an "anticipatory breach" of our First Amendment rights. Just before the Games began, a federal judge ruled in our favor, noting that there was little likelihood of anyone confusing our poster with the corporate goals of the Olympic Committee, and opining that they must believe that Zeus himself, from atop Mount Olympus, had given them exclusive rights to the word "Olympic."

But then came the Olympic Torch Runner through the streets of Washington, D.C. and onto the steps of the U.S. Capitol in a welcoming ceremony sponsored by the Senate. My offices were only a few blocks from the building, and on the morning of that ceremony (to which the public had been invited), I arrived with a

banner that we had prepared to take to Lake Placid and display during the Games. The banner read: "Olympic Torch = Freedom, Olympic Prison = Slavery." I stood at the back of the crowd so as not to obstruct anyone's view, and raised the banner.

Soon, a Capitol Hill Police captain approached and inquired if I had a permit to demonstrate. I answered that I did not, but asked if the many others in the crowd with signs welcoming the torch runner had permits. The Captain told me they did not, but that my sign was "not in the spirit of the ceremony," and ordered me to put it down. If I refused, he said, he would have me arrested. I replied that I believed the First Amendment protected my speech, and that if he arrested me, I would sue. Again, he ordered me to relinquish the banner. Again, I refused. Two other officers then arrested me and took me into custody. I was released some hours after the ceremony ended, and charges against me were dropped. I sued.

While our campaign to Stop The Olympic Prison was unsuccessful (today, more than twelve hundred young men, mostly men of color, are incarcerated there), my lawsuit succeeded. The result may be instructive both for those contemplating how they might express their opposition to the upcoming Olympic Games in China, and for the government that hopes to impose "time, place and manner" restrictions on such demonstrations. In a word, what my case determined is that where there is "no obstruction of pedestrian or vehicular traffic" by a single demonstrator (who does) "not threaten or provoke violence," there is no right to impose the kinds of restrictions allowed on larger, organized gatherings.

San Francisco officials might also want to consider this from the court's decision: "Freedom of expression would not truly exist if the right could be exercised only in an area that a benevolent government has provided as a safe haven for crackpots." (That would be me...) "[W]e do not confine the permissible exercise of First Amendment rights to a telephone booth or the four corners of a pamphlet..."

A word to the wise...

By the way, even though he won his lawsuit, it took fifteen years before the government stopped appealing their loss. And what did he win? Well, the most important thing was a decision from the court that redefined what a protest is — and what a protest is not — in terms of what the government is allowed to control. For those who see dollar signs whenever they say, "Sue the bastards," you should also know one more thing. He was awarded a total of \$15... one dollar for every year it took the courts to finally resolve the case...

Before we close, here's this issue's topics that were discussed prior to most of the writing that is featured in this fabulous issue.

The first topic, the not so popular, "Cleaning up for the county rather than for yo' momma." - Honestly, when was the last time you scrubbed your family's toilet? Why are you so anxious to fold strangers' poopy underwear and wash their nasty dishes, but when it comes to doing this for your family and housemates it ain't cool? Do you love to be on clean-up crew here in Juvenile Hall? Share with us an experience that you've had while on clean up crew. What is the nastiest thing you've seen cleaned? Tell us about a time when someone on the outs asked you to clean up. Did you do it? Why or why not? After you've cleaned up some of the messes in here, will you clean up once you get out?

Our second topic, "Living The Double Life" - Do you live a double life, one part gangbanger or criminal, the other part a decent, helpful person, going to school to achieve something, playing sports, helping your mom and younger siblings? If so, does this "double life" create problems for you, either at home or with your homies? Does it ever leave you confused? What do you do when your family wants you to do one thing, but your homies want you to do another? Can you satisfy one part of your life without disappointing the other? Are you struggling to give up this double life, and put both feet on one path or the other? Which will you choose?

Our third topic, "Life Before Cell Phones" - You don't have to be all that old to remember what it was like before everyone had his or her own, personal cell phone. How many can remember when you had to wait at home, sometimes for hours, for someone you expected to call you? Do you remember having to look for a public telephone at school or in a store or in a phone booth on the street to make that call you just had to make? How has life changed for you, or for your family, now that you are freed from phone lines and stationary telephones? Have cell phones created any problems for you? Have they made life on the streets faster? Have you lost cell phones and had to pay for new ones? Why did you select the mobile phone company you use? Now, tell us a cell phone story that only you can tell, or just tell us how different life was before cell phones.

The last topic, and most popular, "Disappointment" - How do you deal with disappointment? When there is a situation that does not work your way, how do you address your feelings? How do you react to disappointment? Do you get angry? How do you handle your anger? Tell us of a time you were disappointed. Who has disappointed you, or who have you disappointed? This week we want to hear your thoughts on disappointment.

We hope you enjoyed this latest editorial note installment. We want to thank Michael Kroll for sharing his wonderful commentary with The Beat community, and we also want to say how thrilled we all are to have him back full-time!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Editor's Note 2

Pieces Of The Week 4

Co-Pieces Of The Week 12

Standouts 20

<i>Alameda</i>	20
<i>Marin</i>	26
<i>San Francisco</i>	28
<i>New Mexico</i>	33
<i>Santa Clara</i>	34
<i>Santa Cruz</i>	44
<i>Voices In Spanish</i>	46
<i>San Mateo</i>	48

The Beat Without 50



I'm Still Here

What's good Beat? This Gangsta Shadow your "Baby Boy Demon." I think this is one of the first times I'm actually just writing without rhyming.

Well, I remember when I first came to The Beat back in Bl. I was barely into my teen years... No, wait ... I was 12 'cause I went the first time in San Mateo Hillcrest. I didn't want to write back then. I was like, "The Beat Within?" I thought it was a rapping place, but I was kinda right. I didn't really start to write until I came in at the end of 2005 after I turned 15. Then I was like, "OK, I'ma do this right here." So that's how I became known in The Beat. Even if I didn't like your responses, I was happy 'cause I was in it.

Fast forward to 2008. I have two kids, Selena (two years old), and Angel (ten months). I love both of my kids very much, even if my baby mama got on my nerves. She back in El Salvador. She with her family. We broke up and she didn't want to help raise the kids. Fine by me. See, her family didn't think it was right messing with a Puerto Rican because of some dumb shhh, but it's cool.

To give you a lil' history, I came from Puerto Rico at five months. My moms from San Juan, dad's from Ponce. They met through a friend at college 'cause at first they were livin' together in New York. Went back to Puerto Rico. My mom had me there, came to California, San Francisco

I was raised in The Mission until 1994 when cops took me away. See, my dad was 17 and my mom was 16. My grandma and the social worker didn't think that my mom was fit to raise me, and my dad didn't live with us. He started dating another Puerto Rican lady. So at four years old, I went to a foster home in Hunters Point for a year. Went to another one for three and a half years, and the last one for five years.

I was bad as hell, always into something. One lady in foster care named me Menso (stupid) because I always had to do something wrong. Always on punishment but never acted like it. After the last foster home, got sent to a group home. That's when I met The Beat 'cause my first case, and I was in juvenile hall.

Went through 18 group homes (failed all of them in San Francisco), two in South City, one in Turlock, one in Merced, two in Stockton, one in Tulare. Ran from all of them. I even been to Seneca Center 'cause the judge thought I was 5150, but I showed her, though. I'll be 18 in nine months and nine days. (Yep, I'm counting.)

I got to go to a group home in Santa Rosa. Right now I got a strike and two felonies. I face a maximum of fourteen years, eight years in the Y and six years in the pen. I've been through a lot. They gave me out-of-home placement, but its nothing 'cause for the past many years I had out-of-home placement. I've seen a lot, done a lot and participated in a lot. But I can truly say I've been to hell and came back unscratched.

And to let all my haters and enemies know, keep sayin' my name you making me into a celebrity. I ain't never left. I'm still here and goin' to stay here.

-Gangsta Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is one of the best autobiographical sketches we've read in The Beat, full of the kinds of details that turn an ordinary piece of writing into something extraordinary. Somewhere along the line in all those group homes and foster homes and out-of-home placements, you learned how to express yourself with skill and honesty, and that is no small accomplishment! We hate the fact that you will now have to spend the next portion of your life in jail and prison, but we know that many people with less ability than you have come through those situations, and have achieved great things. Yes, you have experienced the equivalent of hell, GS, but you are not unscathed. You are scarred (as, to some extent, we all are), and we think it is in your interest (and the interests of your children) to examine those scars and realize that they only partly describe you. You are much more — much greater — than the sum of your worst deeds. Whether you want to admit it or not, we see a warmth buried deep within your heart that you have had to learn to protect with a hard exterior. If you can spend the time you have trying to examine what's beneath that exterior, if you can be alone with your heart, we believe your intelligence will let you see yourself in a different light, and that light could be like a beacon to a far better future. As a child, you had no control over the painful circumstances you kept finding yourself in. Now, as a young adult, you can begin to craft a different future so that you are in control of those circumstances. We know that the easy thing for you would be just to accept the image you want to portray — that of "Baby Boy Demon" — and not do the hard work of self-examination and critical thinking. But you are neither a baby boy nor a demon, and you are blessed with uncommon gifts. Don't throw those gifts away.

"Smokey, I'm Not the Smartest Guy in the World, But..."

My favorite movie is "Friday." The star of the movie is Ice Cube. One of the reasons that I like this movie is because it's very realistic. The movie is very down to earth ... it makes you think about how life really is in the hood. One of the lines in the movie that I really took to liking "Smokey I'm not the smartest guy in the world, but from here it looks like you taking a shhh."

I like this line in the movie because I can remember times in my neighborhood. The movie has a lot of kids growing up in the ghetto can relate to the scenes because it's like every day life to them. Plus to see something in a movie that's a part of your every day life is good to watch. It can teach you something to do and some things not to do.

Overall the movie was great. It was a good movie because it touched how life is in the hood. There were parts from the movie that were hella funny. There were also pints in the movie where they were making jokes and it really shouldn't have been a joke.

I saw that because if there was a little kid watching the movie, and they see all the stealing, killing and fighting, they might take it the wrong way.

I say that because if there was a little kid watching the movie, and they see all the stealing, killing, and fighting, they might take it the wrong way, like since it's on the movie that it's cool to do. It's bad because it's like giving kids the wrong message, like all of that is cool, but it's not. It sends them the wrong messages, you never know... they might go out and try to do some killing, fighting and stealing. But overall, the movie was great.

-Stewie, Alameda

From The Beat: Great review, Stewie! You could make a career out of this! So what age is the 'right' age for someone to see Friday? How old were you when you first saw it? Did it influence you to do bad things? And if seeing violence and stealing on film has a bad effect on children, what do you think of when how it effects them when they see all that stuff in real life?

Gotta Set Myself Straight

Disappointment? Yeah, I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed with the fact that some people don't understand that there ain't nothing I could do to fix the situation I left behind when I came here. Disappointed with the fact that my lil' brother pickin' up bad habits and stressin' out my moms. Disappointed that I can't help the people that need me right now. All these things that are going on out there and I can't control a single one.

But how do I deal with this disappointment? Well, ain't much I could do but call my people and give a word of my advice. But everything that's happenin' out there only seems to get worse. So I'ma just lay back, chill here 'til my court next month, and pray for the best. Hopefully my people will make some better decisions like I will when I get out.

I want my girl and my two sisters to know that I wish y'all the best. My partner in and my homie need to keep their heads up, too. Gotta use this time to set myself straight. Gotta go.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your list of disappointments could be read as a warning to all who think (and write) that being here "ain't nothing." It's something, and you've laid out just exactly what that something is. We are most encouraged by your commitment to "make some better decisions" when you get out, because it is in those decisions that your freedom lies. What are you planning to do (and not to do) when you get out of here so that you don't have to endure any more of the disappointments you write about, and so that you won't disappoint yourself again?

Love

This is the first love story I was in love with M. She was my neighbor who lived behind my grandma's house. She lived there with her step dad, mom, two sisters and lil' brother. She was the girl next door.

At first, I didn't want to be with her, but my cousins peer pressured me to get with her, so I did. I went out with her for three months in the summer. It was summer love. She loved me and I loved her. She was my first love. I wanted to take her to Vegas but she couldn't go, so I stayed with her and we went to San Francisco I bought her a season pass to Raging Waters. We went, but not a lot because her mom didn't let her out a lot. But everyone told me, "When you gonna hit it?" I said, "Don't trip."

I wanted to take her to a motel to handle business, but her mom didn't let her out. That was a week before school started. When I didn't get none, I dumped her. She cried for hours and my cousins told me about it then school started. She wrote me a letter. She wanted me back. I said no. She said she'll do anything, but I still said no. At the time I thought I was a playa 'cause everyone called me it, but now looking at it at 17 1/2, I have a different mentality. I'm sorry for what I did to her.

At the end of the year she moved to Texas. I never seen her again, but I wrote to her telling her I was sorry and I changed. Now I see boys doing what I'm doing, breaking girls hearts and not caring being playas is what everyone wants to be. Me, I don't wanna be that no more. I hate it. Now if I get a girl, I will be faithful and not lie to her. I will be honest. I feel remorse for what I did, but I will never do what I did to M ever again to any girl.

-Vincent, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think the most important word that describes what you did to M, and what you see others doing to other girls, is the word "boy." You were acting like a boy, not a man, and you let other boys push into. It's not just that you're 17 and half now, because we know plenty of males much older than you who are still boys in how they think of females and how they treat them. "Handling business" doesn't happen at a motel, it happens every day in any real relationship, and it requires work and attention. You have learned a lot and grown a lot, and it is a pure pleasure to see how deeply you have been affected by this experience, how willing you are to criticize yourself, and how ready you are to act like a man. Any dog can do the deed, but only a responsible male can move from boyhood into manhood. Did you ever get a letter back from M when you wrote her your apology? We think that when you do find that special person, she will be very lucky to have you.

I Have A Wonderful Family

I been locked up for a problem called curfew. I went to court and I didn't get out and I am really sad because I'm putting my family through a lot of stress. They come and visit me every day because they love me with their whole hearts, and I love them with my whole heart.

I got two parents that adopted me and I have a wonderful family. I clean up my room and wash my own clothes now because my parent told me to. I have a sister named Leayla and I love her because she is in the family and I stay right next to her like she is my DNA. She helps me a lot. I have a lot of fun with the whole family. I love them with my whole heart.

I go to a school called Rise, and my school goes on a lot of adventures. I love the school because it help me learn and I have fun there. I love my whole family, Leayla, Richard, Kathy. Teddy is my cat that I love from the SPCA. He is black and he is part of the family. I can't wait to get out of here and change around my life. I love my family.

-Don Cardona Michael, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a wonderful piece, a tribute to a family that you clearly love and that clearly loves you. How lucky you are to have such a loving family to go home to, and how much you owe them! Don't make them sad because you are locked up. Do the things you know you should do, the things they ask you to do, and stop doing the things that lead you away from them. Telling them how much you love them is very important. But showing them how much you love them is even more important.

The Economy

Man, the economy is outrageous because how they gonna raise taxes, tolls from the bridge from Marin to San Francisco and from Oakland to San Francisco, gas prices, and the dollar isn't worth a dollar no more, it's worth less than a dollar! European money is worth more than US money. The US is in debt with itself and it's spending money it don't have on these wars and stuff. The country is bankrupt. We owe billions of dollars to the Chinese and ourselves, the taxpayers. Anybody who got a legit job is gonna have to pay these bills off. People are gonna have less spending money—they've gotta buy their needs first, 'cause wants always come last, but some people put wants firsts. Wants is like extra clothes and shoes, needs is food for your family and things for your home.

If I was one of the high persons, a civil rights leader, I would honestly—I don't know, I wouldn't know where to start. The money being worthless, us common folk, people from the cities and the rural areas—it's only gonna affect us in ways like gas, food, taxes. It's more or less gonna affect the big economies, not the little, like McDonald's probably gonna have a \$5 or \$4 menu, no more \$1 price. The poor really gonna suffer. Once it hits the big economy, it's us common folk gonna suffer drastically.

-Tha Dude, San Francisco

From The Beat: You've given the state of the US economy a lot of thought, and not just about how it's affecting you, but how it affects many who are rich and also poor. It hurts to know that all those people are losing their homes from those sub-prime mortgages, and are living with relatives, in tents in parks, or are now homeless, and that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are killing so many and bankrupting our country. We appreciate your opinions.

Me And My Uncle

When I was lil' my uncle was drinking and he had too much.

I told him I had a boyfriend he said, "Let me show you what he is going to do to you."

But I told him no, and he still kept telling me, "let me show you."

No no no... you're going to hurt me. Stop, get off me. Please stop, I'm going to call the po-po, stop.

And he was telling me to "shut up bitch, ain't no one going to believe you 'cause you young and stupid and I am a grown ass man, but do you think they really want to believe you?"

My uncle kept doing it to me, until I was fighting back for myself when I was young. But he just kept hittin' taking away my womanhood from me. It hurt so much that I couldn't take it anymore, so I just stay still and let him do what he wanted to do, and I want to tell someone but he said he would kill me.

Later on I told my daddy and he didn't believe me, and I told my grandmamma, and she didn't believe me at all, so I told my mom and Te-Te and they believed me and I called the po-po (police). They wanted to report it and I told them no. My mom and Te Te told them what I told them so the po-po took the report and told them to be on the watch for my uncle.

But if my uncle was to do that to my sister I will kill his ass, but Beat, that is all I know. I will be writing y'all from my group home when I get there. But Beat I want you to know that I am happy to let y'all know what happened to me when I was young.

-Jacqueline, Alameda

From The Beat: We're glad you wrote on it too, Jacqueline. When you write what happened, it's a good way to remind us that a strong young person can rise above anything! What do you picture when you imagine the kind of person you would want to share your life with or be close to in the future? Take care, you have our good thoughts.

Mi Padre

Yo me pongo a pensar en mi madre. Es tan triste estar lejos de sus seres queridos. Yo paso pensando tanto en mis hermanos. Como quisiera tener a mi padre vivo como otros lo tienen. Cuidenlo mucho.

Yo me pongo triste al ver como ellos vienen a ver a sus hijos. Me pongo a llorar. Me pongo triste con un amigo que tengo aquí porque él me contó que adelante de él mataron a su abuelo. Yo le dije, a mí no me gusta decir esto, pero a mí me mataron a mi padre en frente de mí. Yo venía del monte en una bicicleta, tenía un machete y me pare porque mi papa estaba parado ahí. Yo lo quería llevar a casa porque estaba borracho. En ese momento, tenía una cicatriz en la cara. Me gustaría contarle lo demás, pero no puedo porque estoy llorando.

From The Beat: No necesitamos más palabra para saber lo difícil que ha sido enfrentar ese suceso. Sentimos mucho que hayas pasado por esa experiencia que a nadie le gustaría pasar. Queremos decirte que apesar de lo que te ha pasado, hay una vida por delante. No dejes que esto te dirija a un mal camino. Tienes que buscar de evitar en pensar en este momento difícil porque te está afectado de una manera u otra. La vida sigue y hay muchas cosas bonitas que la vida ofrece. Date la oportunidad de disfrutarlas y ser una persona diferente. Puedes ser muy feliz si así lo deseas. Si crees que esta experiencia te está molestando tu estado emocional muy frecuente, hay personas profesionales capacitadas para ayudarte con esto. ¡Piénsalo! Estamos aquí para escucharte. Nos gustaría escuchar el final de tu escritura sino te causa molestia. Gracias por tus palabras.

My Father

I think about my mother. It's very sad to be away from your loved ones. I spend my time thinking about my brothers. How I wish to have my father alive like others. And to take care of them.

I get sad to see when their parents come to see their kids. I start to cry. I get sad with a friend who I have here. He shared a story to me about how they killed his grandpa' in front of him. I told him that I don't like to say this, but my dad was murdered in front of me as well. I was riding back home on my bike, I had a machete and I stopped because my dad was standing there. I wanted to take him because he was drunk. In that moment, he had a scare on his face. I would like to share the rest with you, but I can't because I'm crying.

-Oscar, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't need to read the rest of your story to know how hard it must have been to face a tragedy like that one. We are sorry that you had to live such an experience anyone wouldn't like to live. We want to tell you that besides what happened to you, you still have a life to live. Don't let this misguide you to a bad road. You should find a way to avoid thinking about this because it is affecting in one way or another. Life continues and there are many beautiful things life has to offer. Life continues and there are many beautiful things life offers. Give yourself the chance to enjoy those things and be a different person. You can be very happy with your life. If you believe that this bad experience is affecting you emotional state very often, there are professionals assigned to these types of issues that can help you. Think about it. We are here to listen to you too. We would love to hear the ending part of this writing if you don't mind, that is when you are ready. Thanks for your words.

Two Different Lives

I'm tired of this, I can't keep
Leavin' one house and go on
To the next house. I can't keep
Looking over my shoulder.
Trying not to get caught up. I gotta
Let someone go, but I don't think it's fair
Just to stay with one. So I'm sorry but I
Guess this is the last time.

-Lil' Ols, Alameda

From The Beat: A sad, powerful poem. As usual, you are struggling with serious issues in a mature way. Which is the house that you want to make your "home" - and what is getting in the way of making that happen? And when you say "Guess this is the last time," what exactly do you mean?

Lonely Nights, Lonely Days

Lonely nights and lonely days,
waking up with headaches
six in the morning
taking cold showers.
Don't know where I'm going.
No one has the answer.
Living for today -
patiently waiting until tomorrow-
killed with sorrow.
It's like there's a tall border...
adrenaline's pumped, wanting to jump.
Fifty to life.
For the life I chose,
my mom's permanently bruised.
All I want is one more chance,
but on the daily
I'm doing the evil dance.
Slowly burning in a fire.
Wanting to go home is my desire.
What's my future?
It's fractured.
Body feeling numb with no gravity,
feeling pain like cavities.
I still walk with my head up,
a smile on my face,
hunger for freedom to leave this place.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Oscar, we know you are in a tough situation. We also know that you have an opportunity to demonstrate that you're growing as a person. Judges take many factors into consideration when they make decisions. We're hoping that the Oscar the judge sees will be a different Oscar from the one who came to juvy a few months ago. We're hoping that we can help you along that road to growth. Don't give up. By the way, nice writing this week.



My Achievement, My Goodbye

First and for most, let me extend my at most love and respect to all who come across my words.

About five years ago, I was incarcerated for the first time. Ever since then, I have had my own recitursmo with on going violation for probation. I have been faced with street redentials, pen credentials and normal civilian law.

Although I have been incarcerated for periods of time, I have finally came to a conclusion. The system will perform its utmost to keep anyone vulnerable to its ways. The knowledge of which I obtained has projected this clearly.

Now that I'm an adult in the system's eyes, (18 years old), They are letting me go (washing their hands of me) and leaving me for the adult system. But, I ain't entering the outside world blind or unprepared. I'm in college, I have my own place and I'm some-what able to clean my record.

I thank The Beat for being here for us and expressing our most inner thoughts (the appropriate ones). Well Beat, this is my last piece. I'm out this book for good. After about ten months, I'm out this time for good! Well I exit this piece the same way I've entered with my utmost love and respect to all. Stay educating ya' selves!

-Educated Gangster, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What an expression! You're on the right road. Keep on working on your education. The more you learn, the wiser and powerful you become. You know how the system works, and now it is time you play with them using the knowledge you've gained while being under its possession. The way you speak is so honest and convincing. Keep it that way and you may make a change in the future. Who knows, maybe you were born to become a good public defender or a lawyer and make a big difference. We're proud of your accomplishment and the way you are guiding your ideas and life.

Courage

It takes courage to always stand tall.

It takes courage to never let your head fall.

It takes courage to call your self manly.

It takes courage to stand up like a man and provide for your family.

It takes courage to make your self from a boy to a man.

It takes courage to put the hood in the past.

It takes courage to live life

'cause you never know how long life is gonna last.

Varrio shhh!

It takes courage to hustle on and off the block

It takes courage to get your dope and separate it and sell them by different rocks.

It takes courage to even stand next to a knock.

It takes courage to wear a certain logo on a certain hat.

It takes courage to walk down the next block, 'cause you never know when them rivals is coming to stomp your hat flat.

It takes courage to be known as a boss.

It takes courage to buy what you want no matter what it cost.

It takes courage to track down a connect to get a glock fresh out the box

It takes courage to see someone's brain splatter

You can't read no one's mind, so you know that they want or know what they're after.

Every one in the room knows it takes courage for your name to be known as a factor.

-Mousie, Alameda

From The Beat: It takes even more courage to step away from that life, to risk ridicule, losing "friends" stepping away from the known (gangster life) into the unknown (a life of hard work and personal success, the life your mom dreams for you). Do you have that kind of courage?

Being a Dad

What up Beat. Well my own topic is about my girl who I call my wife because she's two months pregnant and of course I'm going to be there during my kid's birth because I'm only in here for two misdemeanors so I already served close to forty days, so when I get out I'm going to dedicate my life to going to school and work so I can give my kid what he/she wants.

I basically want to be the best father and later in life to be the best husband. I just pray to God to help me live a good gang-free normal life and have a very good job to buy diapers, clothing, a stroller just for my baby and that's all that matters to me is my baby's mama and my kid.

I'm tired of living the harsh reality of these gang-infested streets because if I end up dead or doing life for some bullshhh then my baby won't have a father to come to when he/she wants advice from a man's point of view or I might not be there for the first day of school. Well Beat that's it.

-Sammy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What an optimistic piece! It's clear to us that you love your lady and your baby and you're determined to live a better life when you get out of here. It's what we want to see for all of you! We hope for the best for you and remember that living the 'normal' life doesn't mean it will be easy. Just keep in mind what and who you love and it will get you through it.

Courage

What courage means to me is rather deep... like meeting my mom for the first time at Sunny Hills Group Home.

Almost 15 years later they found her, and when I seen her I wanted to ask so much, like, "Why did you give me up?" and "why didn't you come back for me?"

When I was at the group homes and the kids would jump me and steal my stuff, I would yell out and say "I can't wait for my mom to come get me..." and the staff and kids would say in unison "Yo' mama don't want you, that's why she sent you here!"

I was like, "you're wrong, she's coming back..." I felt like she was the only one that could save me, and she never came, and I often wondered what her hugs felt like, if she was hip or old school, if I would ever do the electric slide with her.

I would say "When I get older I'm going to invite my mom to my proms and dances," and when I met her all that was out the door. She said "I don't want nothing to do with you, Martell, or Kevin, just stay away from me."

Until one day my foster mom picked me up and she cared for me, and she didn't have no husband, and it was just me and her and she came to my basketball games and boxing class and recitals, and then on out I started being around my females - mom, my cousin that some of y'all know, and my sister Michelle.

They weren't blood, no, but blood couldn't have made us any closer. And I never had a father figure, so in my mind they don't exist.

Still, to this day, it took courage to trust my foster mom after being hurt by my mother.

So if you have a story like mine's, don't worry. Come up here and tell it, even if you have to cry... because everyone has courage, you just have to find it, That is what courage means to me. Taking that step to trust someone after all you've been through.

-Sydy Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: There are so many lessons in courage in this piece, the courage you showed as a young boy, holding on to a dream that helped you survive those dark days, the courage to shout back at the people taunting you, the courage, like you say, to love again, and finally the courage to lead by example, to tell the story of what you've been through and encourage others to do the same. Bravo!

Where My Daddy?

Raised by the streets, never knew his pops.
Poised in the 'hood with the thugs and knocks.
Moms alone, trying make ends meet.
Working three odd jobs to put J's on his feet.
Roaches in the room where he slept at night.
Twelve years old, smoking weed, 'cause it felt so right.
Sip a little bit a gin 'til his body numb.
Starting popping as a young teen, puttin' pills on his tongue.
Mad at the world, what he do? He run.
Ran away from his home without taking his gun.
Moms took it from him, her eyes full of tears.
Found it in his dresser drawer, and it topped her fears.
Arrested on a robbery, he was sent to the halls.
Three days in his room, just starin' at the walls.
They put him on probation to see how he would act.
Did good for ten months and then they brought him right back.
Burglary charge, and he tried to fight the police.
Now he sittin' in the halls, waitin' his release.
They gave him twenty days; he did it real fast.
Got out and was motivated all about cash.
So he hustled with his cousins, pulling licks for scritch.
Got laced by OGs, money over a beezie.
Hit a lick and got caught with his potna in crime.
Nobody was gone snitch; they both did the time.
They shipped him off to an all-boys school
But he was up there, hawgin', sayin' forget the rules.
He didn't lick, somebody snitched, but didn't want the glory.
Police was in his face, asking him for the story.
He said he didn't know, so they gave him a look.
They said, "You don't tell us what happened—you're gonna get booked."
Shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, white faces turned red.
Police was hellra mad, but enough was said.
They couldn't cuff him up, 'cause there wasn't any evidence.
So they took him back to his original residence.
Ran away from home; rollas caught him thizzin'.
Tried to tell 'em where he lived, but he was also slizzin'
(perkin' or leanin' Robitussin.)
They booked him on possession of a blue naked lady, lamic
(high) in the halls
So you know he goin' crazy

-J, Marin

From The Beat: Is this young man you? You raise a whole lot of interesting questions, such as since this young man knows his mother is working so hard and so long trying to earn money to keep her family together, why doesn't this teenager tell her he doesn't need Js, which can cost from \$150 to \$200 or more? Why is he using a gun? Who is he terrorizing, threatening or hurting or worse? You must have a good heart for this young man, whether he's someone else or you, but can you see his hurt and confusion is driving him to self-destruct? If this young man came to you for advice, what would you tell him? How would you help him? If this guy is you, can you learn from your own wisdom and listen to your heart?

Gay Poem

Love's an unpredictable
gift from up above.
You can search but you will not find,
even if it's always on your mind,
and you feel like you got left behind.
Until that one special day
when you find that person
that makes it so you can't look away
and you finally realize your gay.

-Rainbow, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one of the greatest Beat poems of all time. And even though it's kindof silly, it also captures something sweet. We miss you already, Rainbow!

Pressure On My Heart

Death is watching
Death is waiting
For you to be the one to fall
My prayers are answered at the barrel of the gun
Gotta pull the trigger
Gotta end my life quicker
I'm stuck in this hate getting dragged down
I was five deep I'm the only one now
How long will it last for me to be in the darkness
Running for my life in the land that's heartless
Cause he died in my arms
I was looking in his eyes
He kept screaming I'm sorry mama never meant to lie
Take care of my kids make sure they grow high
For eternity now I shall be in the sky

-Jesse, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very dark piece. But why do you feel so much hate? Can't that hate turn into anything positive? Why do you have to make everything so negative? This life is already as negative and harsh as it is and all we can do is make it a little easier and better for ourselves.

DIANE MARCIAL RIP

I found out today that my aunt died yesterday.

We used to go ice skating. It was fun – she fell on her behind and I started laughing. She took me somewhere in Hayward.

I'm not gonna read this out loud 'cause it's gonna make me cry. She used to take me to school, and I used to talk to her when I was feelin' down. She used to tell me I'm her little angel, when I was like 12 years old. ... she was like a mother to me. She's my mom's sister When I was young she used to sing me lullabies, she made me pasole....

She died yesterday – she died of a heart attack. ... I called my mom today to come to my court date tomorrow and she told me. My mom was crying when she told me.... I just broke down and cried and I dropped the phone....

She was a nice loveable caring person. If she could hear me now, I would tell her I love her, I miss her, and she will always be in my heart.

-Dominique, Alameda

From The Beat: It took a lot of courage to write this piece from in the middle of your grief, and to share it with the rest of The Beat. We are sure that your aunt knew your love for her, and that her love for you will stay in your heart even though she's gone. Let that love help keep you strong.



*Love to my brother living in peace
and to all my loved ones that
didn't make it.*

Double

I have a friend. He thinks like me, looks like me, acts like me, but ain't just the same.
He walks like me, talks like me, but we're on different games.
He has the same name, he has the same last name too.
While he's at school studying,
I'm on the block chugging.
At night, he sits at home with his family and kid.
Me, I'm just with the homies talking about the crime we just did.
He wakes up in the morning thinking if today's his day to find a four-leaf clover.
Me, I wake up in the afternoon with the fattest hangover .
But yet we're so the same
Every thought we think comes out at the same time.
Our heart beats so equally, it makes a perfect rhyme.
But then again we're so different
See, his thought was to live simple and easy
And mines, well you can say I try to catch the beesies.
I party and don't think twice.
And him, he's with family playing monopoly tonight
Gotta go, time for me to roll the dice.

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Two people in one, but only one can withstand/As Abe Lincoln said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand,"/No one of us is just one thing or the other/But there comes a time to choose — please yourself, or please your mother/You're wise enough to see the complexities in what it means to be human/But are you wise enough to avoid the deadly pitfalls that are loomin'/We hope you can put the pieces together and become one/So that you are blessed by the rising, and not cursed by the setting sun

I Get Disappointed

I don't get that mad anymore because I get disappointed a lot.
My mom and dad are both from a gang,
my mom and dad used to fight
about what set me and my brothers were going to rep.
My brother didn't pick any of their sets, and my parents got mad. My turn was up and I picked my set,
got ranked in and my biggest disappointment was when they said I was cut off.
My life was over and my mom and dad still don't talk to me as much any more.
My twin sisters cut me and my parents off,
she thinks gangs are for stupid low life's
that don't got any thing better to do with their lives
then to shoot people, smoke weed and get arrested.
My sisters took the good road
one of the twins are going to college next year
with a soccer scholarship and I barley finished the 7th grade
how sad is that.

-Shannon, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Shannon maybe your twin knows something? If she's doing good and not getting locked up or doing drugs maybe you should think about the road you're on and the one she is on. If your other sister is going to collage and doing well because she is not in a gang or doing drugs maybe you should start listening to your siblings? Maybe what they are saying is true? Would you rather be free or be locked up because your in a gang and doing drugs? Life is all about choices, its time you made the right one.

Living The Double Life

Yeah, I live the double life. Growing up the streets took over 'cause moms wasn't there. I had to feed myself. But I had my granny, a very special person that anyone could learn from.

I've done things in my life that was good, real good. Getting my education was one thing that was taught to me by that special person, and I prospered from down. I wasn't tryin' to have only one chance. I want two. Either get my money and take care of my family legit, or do it the otha way, hustle.

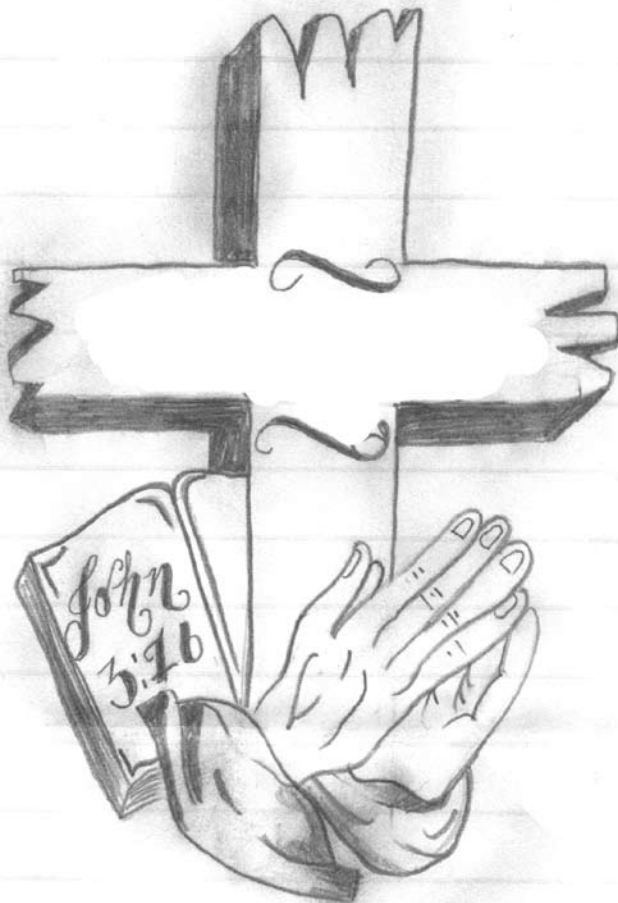
My patnas neva get on my line about going to school because they my real patnas. They even tell me to go to school and do what I gotta do. That's one of the reasons why I still hang with them. I want to make my life as simple as it can be.

A goal that I've had ever since I was little was to go to heaven, so I know I'ma have to choose. So in life when I'm ready and I know I want go back, I'ma turn my life over to god, and hopefully my homies will do the same.

Love to my brother living in peace and to all my loved ones that didn't make it.

-Dontae, San Francisco

From The Beat: We very much appreciate the honesty of this piece, Dontae. There is so much positive here. Not just your desire to finish school (which is a must), but also your desire to live as simply as you can, and to go to heaven. Our biggest fear, though, is that by putting off the time when you stop the hustle and turn your life to God, you are only prolonging the possibility that something bad will happen before you make your choice. You know you can't live a double life forever, and so we wonder how long you think you have, and how many chances you get. You cannot serve two masters, so we urge you to make the right choice without waiting until it's too late.



To The Beat Within

Yo Beat, this is the homeboy Cost-E-Yone. This week is my last week in Juvenile Hall. Next week, I'll be making my five-hour flight to Wyoming for the 12-18 month Normative Program. With that said, this week I would like to throw some shout outs to all those who helped me take something from my 6 month stay and helped make it livable. But before I get to that let me share a few words of wisdom...

A famous man named Lao-Tse once said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

Here's my word of wisdom to all the homeboys locked up... Many cats come in here and look at this as a setback or a proof of failure. What I want to say is if that everyone can take something out of this experience. It can only hold you back if you let it hold you back.

For me, being in here has actually taught me a little here and there. About two months ago I decided I wasn't going to let the system make me feel like a failure. Since then I've been trying my hardest to take something from my experience so I won't come back. I've decided to make this my first step towards my thousand mile journey of success.

Now...for my shoutouts...

My first shoutout is to The Beat Within. I want to thank them for making it possible for youngsters to express themselves in words when all others keep trying to hold us back. Much Honor and Respect to The Beat.

My next shoutout is to the staff of SCCJH: Mr. Walker, Mr. Matau, Mrs. Gonzales and all of last year's staff from B-10. Much Honor and respect. Also I would like to send a shoutout to last year's staff of B6, Ms. Joseph, Mr. Gutierrez, and all others. The staff at Juvenile Hall has helped me change in a small way. That made a big difference. Much Honor and Respect.

Also I would like to send a shoutout to my family who has stuck by my side through thick and thin and seen potential in me when I could only see darkness. Much Honor, Respect, and Love.

Also a shoutout to all incarcerated. Keep your heads up and stay solid!

And last but not least: a shoutout to myself. My self-respect and determination has pulled me through 6 months of this bullshhh dead time. But it's in me to be successful so I won't quit now. Honor and Respect to all.

-Cost-E-Yone, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one of the most inspiring pieces we've seen. It is a courageous thing to be able to use this experience to better your self. We know that it is difficult to find positives in the Hall, but you have. We hope that you have taken your first, second, and third steps of the thousand mile journey to success. We know you can succeed because of this attitude. Honor and Respect to you, Cost-E-Yone.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Have you ever felt the feeling of disappointment?
When someone tells you one thing and does another?
Well I have...

On the 26th I had court and the day before, my PO told me for sure I was getting out on drug court.

But then when I went in front of the judge, they told me that I'm going to go out of town for three months.

I was so mad but there was nothing I could do but cry.

As I continued to cry,

I knew I was going and all

I could do was just deal with it and do my time.

So now as I'm waiting to go, I can't stop thinking of why I did this shhh to disappointment myself.

From the age of 14 to 17, I was running away from home.

I always blamed it on my mom.

Now that I'm almost 18, I can see that it was all just me.

-Gloria, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Although it's very hard to be sent away from home, it's not the end of your world. Being away will hopefully keep you out of trouble and out of the system. Not everyone has the chance to go to a new place to experience support and treatment. It's all in the way you look at it. If you complain about it, you'll do poorly. If you see the good it will do you, you will succeed. We hope you make the best of your situation.

Love is Frustrating

So, love is a difficult thing.

Especially when the person I love is constantly disappointing me.

My dad has been my biggest disappointment.

Who leaves their daughter on the porch in the cold all night?

Then doesn't let her in to use the bathroom?

Damn, that's sad. But you know what? I still keep my head up high and am taking care of my shhh.

As much as some people show me their sympathy, it's not me that needs it - it's my dad. I'll be doing shhh big while my dad is sitting waiting for his child support check to live off of. Why not get a job and have a paycheck?

I guess that would be too hard for a lazy ass.

- Disappointed Daughter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The most important thing is that it seems like you are not letting the problems with your father get you too down. You can recognize that he has his own problems and you are living your own life. But remember, forgiving people sets us free.

So Much Disappointment

Well there is so much disappointments out there in the streets

Don't let it get to you, just write about it to The Beat

You can freestyle or let your soul bleed.

Role it up in one song like you used to roll weed
But you don't need to smoke weed 'cause you lose your brain cells

It might get you locked down in county jail

So be smart, think about it, think before you act
Because it only takes one second and you can end up on your back

And I ain't talkin' about bein' knocked down

It can be even worse, you can lose your life

End up in a hearse, so don't let your disappointments

Get to you keep yo' head up and if you

Out there on the block ...keep yo' bread up.

-Lil' T the Freestyle King, Alameda

From The Beat: You are living up to the name of Freestyle King! Our next question to you is how can you "keep yo' bread up" in a legit way, so you don't have to end up suffering the way people do out there when they face... disappointment?



The Disappointment Problem

Disappointment isn't the easiest problem to deal with. How I deal with disappointment is probably different than how others deal with it. I'm used to it.

I've been disappointed ever since I can remember, literally all my years growing up. How I deal with it now is I work out to let all the pain out. When I run into a situation that doesn't go my way I address my feelings by thinking of something positive that will change my feelings and turn them around. How I react to disappointment is I exclude myself to be by myself. Then I think...try to think positive.

Do I get angry? Sometimes, it depends on the reason why I'm disappointed. How I handle my anger is I'll work it out or talk it out with someone I trust enough to open up to.

A time I was disappointed is when my whole life growing up, off and on, my mom was never capable to raise me. She was always very unstable which kills me inside 'till this day.

My thoughts on disappointment to everyone else who encounters this feeling: to not let it too deep under your skin, if you know what I mean. Try to look at the things you have that don't disappoint you or do what I do and just work out all the pain. One more thing though: always keep your head up through thickness and thin. Remember life is like a rollercoaster, it has its ups and downs. Just know when you're down, pray to God to give you strength to bring you back up if needed.

All right, Beat, about that time to cut it short. Stay up!

-Floyd Troubles, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate the wise words on this topic. We can tell you've spent some time thinking about disappointment. It is very encouraging that you have found a way to channel your negative feelings through exercise and positive thinking. This shows great maturity and we hope you continue to follow your own advice.

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How I handle my anger is I'll work it out or talk it out with someone I trust enough to open up to.

Let It Ring

Freedom, let it ring

From the highs of the mountains

Shall we all sing

We might be chained down with whelps on our backs

But with the courage of our hearts

We shall change all that.

"Yeah Master, yeah Master" is what our ancestors went through.

But now there is a new generation

And freedom is what was given to you.

Yeah, though there is fear in our hearts for one another

Remember that once upon a time Martin Luther King

Had a dream

That no matter your color.

That we would love, honor, forgive each other.

Freedom, let it ring

From the highs of the mountains, shall we all sing.

But let us all remember that yesterday is gone.

And today is a new day where voices are found.

Let us honor our mothers and fathers

... For I believe that a child is not a child without a home

Freedom, let it ring

From the highs of the mountains,

Shall we all just one day sing.

-Jordan, Alameda

From The Beat: "A child is not a child without a home..." this line is so true. Did you feel like you had a home? And a childhood? Now that you are moving forward into womanhood, how will you personally break free of the mental chains that could hold you back?

Disappointment In My Dad

The most disappointed I felt was getting stood up by my dad. My dad was in jail for most of my life so when he got out he always used to say "I'm going to pick you up this weekend." I would have my bags packed waiting on the porch. As I waited, every 10 minutes he would call and say he was on his way.

Unfortunately most of the time he never came. But the only time I seen him was when I was in trouble and he would try to play father of the year and come yelling at me. After a while when he called and said he was coming I wouldn't even get ready knowing to myself he wasn't coming.

Today, me and my dad are more like friends then anything else. We cuss around each other, I smoked weed in the living with him around. But in some ways we are the same: he's on parole and I am on probation; he did time, I did time. I am not blaming him for me being in the hall, but if he was a parent not a friend I wouldn't be in here.

-Jeremiah, Alameda

From The Beat: A lot of us here at The Beat have also felt the disappointment you spoke of so we know how that is. You just have to see things for what they are and not what they seem to be and do your best to march down the path you need to be on for your future success... with or without your pops around. We can walk backwards looking at the past and keep tripping over things we can't change and continue stumbling and falling, or we can turn around and focus our attention on the present and make the future what we want it to be. Thank you for stepping up and sharing your thoughts on this topic.

You Can't Run Forever

What's up with The Beat? This Drew. I'm up in this max thang tryin' to do it moving to Wyoming. I don't know anything about Wyoming, so I am about to see what they are talking about.

At first I was gone run once I got out. I'm hearing that it's a new program and its co-ed, so I'm about to be there with some females so its probably gonna be coo'. I got to do nine months to a year and that ain't long at all. It's just the fact I don't feel like doing it.

If this program accepts me, I'm gone be wit' some people I mess with, so me and my ninjas just gone knock this time out. I just got to say that you can't ran forever. Trust me. I tried more than once. Just knock your little time and get back to your folks.

-Drew, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you find other things besides females that you didn't expect to find, but which broaden your experience and knowledge. Deciding not to run is a sign of moving out of childhood and into responsible adulthood. Why not write to us when you get into the program for a while and tell us about it — what's good and what could be made better. We wish you luck and success.

Being Responsible

Cleaning up the county make you feel like a slave, but then again it shows you responsibility. I believe that not cleaning for moms ain't cool because you may get something in return from her. But from the county you get nothing, and I know that whatever moms get you, it's better than what the county gets you.

I'm the type of person that'll learn the least I can do is to clean for moms, make her happy.

-Young G, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree that cleaning for the county (and for moms) can teach you responsibility. We also like that you see that what you get by doing for your mom is far more than what you get by doing for the county. Now, we hope you gain enough responsibility to find a way to stop doing the things that lead you here, so that you can give your mom the thing she wants the most — you, at home with her!

Living The Double Life

Yes, I live the double life and it can be very hard at times. Doing things my mom want me to do, and then doing what I feel I have to do to be happy. My mom wants me to go to school, which I'm currently not doin' because I'm having a need for money more than school.

I'm only 17 years old, and school always seemed hard for me to complete. Plus, (it's hard) with me having the urge of wanting to be a dancer, model, actor, and rapper. At times I feel I could make it big before I can complete school.

I stay out all day doing work for the family and people. Just any type of work for some money. I used to steal, but sitting in juvenile hall, I seen that wasn't my route. I'm still 17. I'll be 18 in three months. So now I'm finna take a acting class. That's going to help me make it to the big screen.

Still work for the family, for money. I'm going to get enrolled in adult school. But that's all for now.

-Lil' Nite, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate the goals you've set for yourself, and we hope you can achieve them. (We didn't know you could study acting in adult school, though.) But here's the thing. The reason you want to finish school is that it gives you a foundation to pursue everything else you want in life. It gives you the key to a future that doesn't require you to steal to get money enough to live. You can study acting/dancing/modeling and still go to school. If you find yourself unable to make it as an actor (and we're not predicting that, just saying "if"), and you haven't gone to school, you have nothing to fall back on. We want to encourage you to go after your dream, but not at the expense of your education.

Serving The Devil

Evil is my mind, thoughts are sick.

The way I think is 6 6 6

Ain't no Jesus Christ in the mix

I hope to be the devil's number one pick

For him to make me his grim reaper

But I don't play fair, I'ma stay low creeper

I may not catch you in your sleep

But I still will lift you off your feet.

You're waiting for that Jesus you expect to see

In the hottest, darkest place you'll ever be

With laughs of my father and me

This is your after-life for eternity

I love how he fuels you up with hate

But all this is is just his bait

For you to mess up and sin

He enters your mind in and out, out and in

Right now I'm locked within these walls

In this so-called juvenile hall

I'm away from the well-known streets

Where the devil makes me play for keeps

I play on his flaming play ground

Where no lil' good boys are found

I left your so-called god my name

And wrote I'll never look at him with shame

If he wants we'll go to war

But he ain't down 'cause we got more

When the day comes let us loose out hell's door

I'ma be the first to show that I'm loyal to the devil

Take any one out that not an evil rebel

Mess with me I wish you would

I know your god never could

Well see you when you're next so see you later

Oh yeah, forget all you haters

-Cisco

From The Beat: We had to take out some of this poem because we don't promote shooting or killing or threatening to shoot or kill. But you have such skills that the power of your angry words elevates this to a co-pow. In fact, we will go so far as to say that anyone who can write as well and powerfully as you do, doesn't have to serve the dark side... You should know that the idea of making a pact with the devil is a very, very old one in human art and literature. (Look up "Faust" and see how many different writers have played with this theme.) But it might be worth remembering, as you play, that the devil is the devil, and not you. Which means, when you play with the devil, be prepared to be betrayed and pay the price. (What you're paying right now is pennies compared to what you might have to pay in the future...) For all your pride in being "evil," you are just a human being, as frail and impotent as all the rest of us. So, be careful what you wish for. You may get it.

A Time Of Disappointment

A time of disappointment is when I got in here, first time being locked up. I disappointed my whole family. During my first visit I remember my mom crying a river non-stop. Even when I called her she was crying. During my visit she told me, "You disappointed me."

My heart felt like it was broken, like I had been in a relationship and I was dumped. My heart felt like it was ripped out of my chest and I was disowned from my family. It was like dis-honored. I almost cried when she told me this. I felt really bad and I had nothing to say to her. I didn't get angry. I was sad, but I knew it was my fault. I want to be released and show everyone that I can change. I will not let them down.

-Vincent, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is no worse feeling that letting your mother down by not living up to her expectations for you. You are in a life-long relationship with your mom, but you haven't been dumped. A mother will never dump the son she loves, any more than the son will ever dump the mother that he loves. You will be released, so you will be able to prove to her — and to yourself — that you are the boy she wants you to be, and the man you are growing to be.

Juvy

Juvy is a personal experience,
 from the courtrooms to the closed doors, to the
 handcuffs.

It depends upon yo' case or yo' attorney and your
 probation officer, should I say.

They say you in here for a while,

then weeks and months, it's what come by.

The days and nights you sit inside of here, it makes you
 wanna cry.

One phone call ain't enough and it's the number they select.

They call us delinquents and don't even know the facts.

Juvy was my second home, but I changed that around.

Now I'm right back where I started. Damn, ain't that a
 frown?

-Brianna, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is disappointing for you to spend so much time locked up, Brianna, but that doesn't mean you're back where you started. That's up to the way you think, not up to where you are. If your thinking changes, then your situation will follow. You are in control of your mind and attitude, not the cops, your attorney, PO or judge. If you've fallen, pick yourself up and start walking again. By the way, we'd love you to tell us the "facts" you say they don't know when they call you delinquents.

Life Before Cell Phones

What's up with The Beat. It's yo' boy Mike writing. Life before cell phones is the topic I'ma write about.

Life before cell phones was phony as hell. Ninjas had to sit in the house waiting for females, homies or their family to call. Sitting in the house waiting on a phone call is a waste of time. You can be out there doing something better with your life rather than sitting up waiting for a phone call. That's why it's smooth that cell phones came out 'cause you can be out on the block and get a phone call.

Cell phones can become a problem, though. People get set up by cell phones. That's why you have to be aware of your surroundings. That's all I gotta say for this week. We all we got.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: (You can be Mike, or BB, but you can't use the Beat name you've chosen...) So tell us, what are some of those "better things" you could be doing rather than sitting at home waiting for a call. Is it possible if you spent more time at home (waiting for calls or not) and less time on the block, you might also be spending less time under lock?

Disappointed In Myself

I'm not anxious to clean another ninja dirty-ass clothes, feel me, but I don't have a choice. If I'm on crew, I gotta do my job or get 2.5, ya dig. Now I can't say I don't like being on crew 'cause a ninja dig being out that room, feel me. When staff tell me I'm on crew and to come do my job, I jump like a house ninja. "Yes sir, boss. We's gone wash the dishes real good boss."

But when I was on the outs, I used to be hot sometimes when I had to do the dishes or take out the garbage. I did it, but I was hot about it when I shouldn't have been 'cause while I'm in here, I jump at attention when I gotta do something with no problem. And that's why I'm disappointed in myself.

-Fed-Up Gloss, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty, and the fact that you've let this experience open your eyes to see what you owe to the people that love you. Of course it's nice to get that special treatment for being part of the crew in here, but what you say about jumping up "like a house ninja" isn't that far from the truth. You are a kind of slave inside this place, and that means you better do what "boss" tells you to do. On the outs, it's just you and those you love, so doing for them should come straight from your heart. From what you've written, we think it will from now on.

Kiss Of Death

I seen death before I was able to talk
 Witness bloodshed before I could walk
 Was told that I was going to be in the pen
 Or end up dead in hell and pay for my sins
 Got sent down but then was rejected.

I feel no remorse 'cause my feelings are dissected
 Diablo tryin' to think what he can do to me
 But I speak the demonic language fluently
 Cold brown eyes, no love, only hate and anger inside
 In heaven I wasn't worthy, so angels I despise
 Knocked Satan off now I own the throne
 Spitting lava outta my mouth like a fountain, homes
 No la vida loca, this called my life of hell
 Pastor Juan held the service and at noon the church bell rung
 Tears of blood, heart cold as ice

Only if your soul will sin then you you'll get an invite
 Into my temple of doom and receive the kiss of death
 Couldn't sell my soul but the devil steady talkin' in my ear
 He talked too much so I ended throwing him off the tier
 No tears since '95, but that's old news
 Nightmares uncontrollable always end in death and my
 mama singin' sad tunes

No more faith in god 'cause I only see one set of footprints
 I recognize them as mine so now know why I sin

Forget fate, me and the lord ain't straight
 Though I love like my mother. Can't help but to think hate
 Think straight with a head, a hood full of screws missin'

No bars, no guards, just a new prison
 Momma was never on meth, crack or herion
 But people wonder why I got so much hate in my veins then

I tell you why, 'cause I raised myself
 Can't trust nobody and never asked for help
 I'm one of the few who will likely end up dead

'Cause the life I live will never end
 Gangsta Shadow also known as a baby boy demon
 'Cause when ever I seen something homicidal or suicidal I
 was always cheesin'

It's been four years since I lost my first child off this earth
 But my other two kids, I love them until I'm laid in the dirt
 Selena and Angel, daddy loves and misses you
 Be good for abuelita while she takes care of you
 People say, "Why bang and got two kids?"

That's all I know so I get it how I live
 I love them with all my heart and I won't stop till I get a
 bullet to the chest

Until the grim reaper comes and gives me the kiss of death

-Gangsta Shadow

From The Beat: Such poetic skills must be rewarded/Which is why that co-pow we've recorded/But the words you write bring tears to our eyes/As we know that Selena, and Angel and your Abuelita cries/Wishing you'd put them ahead of what you describe as "all you know"/So that they aren't lost too, but have a chance to grow/You say your heart is cold and filled only with hate/But we can't believe those words when we read of the love you state/No, you have not knocked Satan off his throne/You've only left two loving children to grow up without a daddy, living alone/We don't want to be accused of hatin'/But if you think this is hell, you should see what they got waitin'/

My Juvy Life

This juvy life ain't shhhh. It's not that hard. But I want to stop coming back and I am. My mom is tired of coming to visit me and she is sad. When I see her, she's in tears and I don't like that. But to stop that I have to stop to come back.

'Much love and respect. You will never hear from me again, because I am not coming back after I leave. Peace.

-Sneaky, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always like to read that this is the last time you'll be locked up. If not seeing your mom cry is important, you'll keep that promise. Being here may not be hard, but each time you come, you make it more likely that the next stop will not be so easy. Now's the time to do what you say you're going to do.

I Breathe off The Weed

Say, mane, the weed help me breathe when I can't exhale...
 Fight off the demons that approach me while I dwell in a cell...
 With the air stale, damn I miss the beautiful smell...
 I mean, the weed help me breathe, it's just somethin' I need
 I never be in denial... shhh I know I'm a fiend...
 It's no excuse for usin' it, it's just the pleasure it brings...
 I never stop 'cause I don't want to, I ain't got no reason
 It calm my nerves when I'm hurtin', you know, emotionally bleedin'...
 Ninja, the weed help me breathe, slow my whole life down
 If you want me to stop, you might as well try to pull a kite down...
 When I'm breathin' off the smoke, I let it flow through my nose
 My Ps and Qs be on alert, you know I stay on my toes...
 Watchin' everything that's movin', listen to ninjas workin' they vocals
 You ain't gotta tell me to stay on my shhh, ninja, I do it 'cause I'm s'posed to...
 The weed help me be coo', especially if I don't know you...
 If I ain't ova and you a snitch, I might try to expose you...
 I breathe off the weed, so when you see me, I'm weeded...
 As, me to quit, that's like askin' me to stop breathin'!

-P.Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: We have to give you props for being such a fine poet/ Your words are like buds from your mind, and you grow it/But still we post warnings, and not just for your health/But also the money it costs, that which affects your wealth/If your addiction forces you to commit other crimes/You'll be writing poems behind walls, time after time/ Your self-medication may be precious to you/But freedom's more precious, and you know that to be true!

Disappointment

Well, what's up Beat? Anyways, I'm still locked up. I've been here in juvenile hall three months now.
 But anyways, what make me disappointed is I got locked up my first time and I'm disappointed to make my mother cry. But I still love my mother no matter what happened. She will always be in my mind and heart forever.
 But another thing that makes me disappointed is I have waited patiently and finished all my programs. But one thing that don't make me disappointed is staying with my family.
 But yeah, anyways I'm going to a group home, but I'm not trippin'. It's cool. I just gotta finish the program, go to school, get a job, and get diploma because I just want my life to be better and stay with my family again when I finish my programs. I miss my family a lot and love them forever. I will never lose love with my family, forever. I always love my family till the everlasting life.
 But anyways, that's all I got to say, Beat. Hopefully next time I'll see you later! Stay up! Much respect and love.

-Pablo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We can feel how much you love and miss your family, and we know they are feeling the pain of being without you. But you have a good plan for putting yourself back together with those that you love, and that plan is to go back to school and get your education. It is the key to the better life you want for yourself. Yes, it is a disappointment to lose your freedom, but it is more disappointing if you do it more than once. Learn from this mistake, and never make it again!

My Lil' Mamma Bear

My lil' mamma is soft and cuddly, but is always ready fo' whateva. She speaks her mind, but barely tells me how she feels. Me and her have a lot in common, but even when she disagrees with me, she don't hold back. And at the same time, when she's mad, she is still the baddest thing walkin'.

She teaches me and I teach her. Sometimes I can't stand her, but a ninja can't let go. We've been through a lot together and apart. We told each otha we'll be together 'til the block stuff in the middle of the bone. She's committed to me as I'm committed to her. My feelings for her go deeper than the title she holds.

Sometimes I don't think she cares, and vice versa, but love doesn't always go in your favor. We argue a lot, but it always end in, "I love you."

But what I really like is that she trusts me. I told her she can tell me anything, and she did. But me and her are the only people alive that know I once told her trust her heart because your head is about living and your heart is about being alive. Your heart can never betray you, and if it led you to look for love where there was none, then it's not done leading you.

The only thing I regret about her is some of the stuff that comes out her mouth. But if I woulda listened to her, I wouldn't be locked up. I call her my Lil' Mamma Bear because when I need a female to turn to, she will always be there. I will do anything for her.

I remember one time one of her friends called me 'cause she got into it with a ninja 'cause she didn't wanna talk to him. I didn't have no ride or nothin', so I got a bottle of Bacardi, some 'dro, and my lil' homie Nina, and got on the bus and went lookin' for her at 3:00 o'clock. That's how close we are, an she'll do the same.

She don't even drink or smoke. We knew each otha since like 2000 or 2001, but I knew her longer then some of my dunnys. Anotha thing that bothers me is her cousins claim a set that don't like me, and that hard for me an her. But we discussed that topic already and it seem like every time I read one of these Teri Woods' book, it remind me of somethin' we been through. If you read "Deadly Reigns," she's Angela as far as the way she acts, 'cause she don't take any of my shhh. But I'm out.

-Young Dunny, San Francisco

From The Beat: What we like most about this description of your relationship is that is not the usual, "She's everything I need. She completes me. She's perfect." No, instead you go into some of the difficulties that every true relationship encounters. It's hard enough living with ourselves; it's doubly hard to accommodate another person, so it's very important to know that it requires constant effort, sometimes giving in, sometimes not, but always loving. Good for you to be mature enough for a mature relationship. Now, if you could only find a way to stay out of places like this, you could give that relationship a chance to grow and mature.

Disappointment

Bullets flying,
 Homeboys dying,
 Once again a disappointment.
 Sitting in a cell,
 Waiting for some mail,
 Another disappointment.
 It seems everyday is a disappointment now days.
 Why wake up to face disappointment?

-Mona, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Good question. So, start making some changes. Start expecting more of yourself. Set some goals, realistic goals. Each day, make a bit of progress toward achieving your goals. Even in jury you can move closer to them. Read yourself silly. Fill yourself with knowledge. Spend today wisely and waking up will be a pleasure, not a disappointment.

Doin' It For Moms

What's poppin' with The Beat, dawg? Yeah, y'all know it's that one and only Iggs the kid. Better known as Yesay, you heard me. This would be my first time really writing about one of the topics fo' real, 'cause this one really caught my attention, dawg.

Ninjas in here would be glad to clean up this whole stinkin' building real quick, but when moms tell us to take out the garbage or wash some dishes, we got 700 reasons on why we don't want to feel like doin' shhh, but hop up quick is shhh when they call you for crew.

The reason for that though is that we be tryna get out that box and get fat plug on the food or on the phone. Ninjas know how it is, dawg.

But say round, when a ninja get out, brah, I'ma wash some dishes brah. Just for moms, straight up dawg. I'm gone though Beat. In a minute, round.

-Young Iggs, San Francisco

From The Beat: You make it very clear why you'd agree to be on the clean-up crew, because you get benefits for doing it. Are there benefits for doing the same at home (not counting the benefits to your mom?). What do you think you will get out of washing some dishes and helping your mom at home, once you get out of here?

Cholo Life

Too many fallen casualties and pain from insanity
 Drop dead look, another tragedy

Pano was tied around his bicep and he dissected his
 vida once mo'

Flashback of the last tracks as he threw up his guts on the flo'
 Mira, he got the maliaz

And can you see him shakin' like he's got a seizure
 Talkin' homicidal but he can't walk without out holdin'
 on to the walls

Suicidal tendencies, naw, he just wants to kill 'em all
 By the calculations of his math, was messed up, he
 almost died

Six days and five nights was how long the vato stayed high
 Not even 15 years young, too far from sprung
 I rather give up a lung smokin' purple than have it
 controlling my tongue

Jumped into the ranfla, skidded to the barrio
 Spot some rucas from the other side, but I didn't talk to
 them though.

Mi vida loca cuetes unleashing bailas
 And to me doin' trempo es nada.

Chale carna, I don't you got two kids
 Símon, homie, but I can't stop doing my bid
 I'm pinta-bound and a soldado por mi estado
 The huda tryin' to wash me along with the chotas and
 narcos

I get so much love from the valley to the bay
 What can I say except te amo golden state
 From the west to the este, homies puttin' down.
 And all my homies know what the motto is, and we do it
 until we in the ground

Since a young vato, I've known to be loco
 Now 17 years old, a down-ass soldado
 Out all day so call me concrete
 A cholo until I'm put in eternal sleep

-Gangsta Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you were jumped in by older boys with a plan/You can jump out by thinking for yourself, like a man/If the cops and narcs are tryin' to wash you, and take you from your daughters/It's you that's giving them all they need, the dirty soap and water/You say doin' time for you is nada/But what is it those who call you "Fatha"?/We're not impressed by the job of soldiers, and that's a fact/Whether here on these mean streets or in the streets of Iraq/The soldier's job is take orders and die by the sword/While those handing out the orders smile and claim their reward/We wish you'd see things as they could be, before you blow it/Because this world is desperate for what you are, a damn fine poet!

RIP CJ

Well let's see what a dunny like me gone write about today. Oh yeah, check this out, tell yo' roommate I said talking dead, real talk. I'm finna tell y'all 'bout my young dunnies just 'cause I love my ninjas. Me and my dunnies been through hell and back, but my dunnies, we there fo' each otha and for ourselves.

But let me tell y'all 'bout this series of events and how some ninjas really ain't yo' real ninjas. Look, me anotha dunny and another ninja was on the bus, right. So it's this lil' ninja on the bus, but he claim what he claim, right. So where I'm from and where he from don't really get along, so since he young, we just playin' with him talking shhh to him.

So we finna get off, and it's like other people from where the lil' dude from, so we exchange our lil' words or whateva. But we wasn't gone get off an get jumped, so we get off an' we see some of the homies drivin' by. So we instantly flag him down, tell him our plans and I get my lil' bone crusher CD out the trunk, but wasn't even trippin' off them ninjas.

So we go to the lil' bank, but the police drove by, so I'm thinking like if I would'a did something, most definitely I woulda got caught by the police or worse. So the like two days later, we by Super Save and see two of the dudes that was talking whateva they was talking 'bout, an' one of they lil' females. But now it's two dunnies and some mutt we be hangin' with, an' I say that 'cause if we woulda got into it, he woulda got ghost, and he older than me an my otha dunny.

But I guess the dudes we was beefin' with didn't like how we came back down there, so now he just wanna try to help his lil' homie earn some stripes so he can get known 'cause he was new to the situation. And the dude that was doin' all the talking, we been getting into it for years, an' he like three years older than me. He just got out not too long ago, so he like my young homie, would go ones with anyone of you ninjas right now.

So my side like it's whateva. But I looked at him like he don't really wanna fight, he just don't wanna be a sucka. But him thinking that that was his homie, he didn't even do nothing. But he wanted to be known so bad he got killed on the street he wanted to be from, and I ain't even tryin' to be funny 'bout this. But that's messed up, 'cause he didn't even know who he was tryin' to beef with, just wanted to fit in.

I wrote this 'cause I'm tryin' to make yo'self known usually ends up the same way. I didn't hand pick and choose where I'm from, it just happened. I'm still alive 'cause I wasn't rushin' fo' my name to ring bells. I rather get whispered about so everybody stop recruiting all these new faces 'cause it ain't meant for everybody.

It really ain't meant for nobody, it's just that some adapt to stuff. RIP CJ, an' he ain't even the homie.

-Young Dunny, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's really that last sentence in this long piece that elevates it to a CO-POW. Living and dying the way so many young people do, like you said, is not meant for anybody. It's a deadly game with no winners, only losers. One side takes out a human being or two, the other side retaliates, and on and on it goes. Each individual could, but the luck of birth and family situation, be on the other side just as easily. It's as insane as any war anywhere. You've written a long piece, and yet we still can't quite understand what went down that someone had to die over. How many weeping mothers whose lives will never be the same will it take before enough is enough?

...it ain't meant for everybody... It really ain't meant for nobody...

The Lie, Living A Double Life

I just want to talk about how I live a double life. Let me see - where do I start?

All right - ever since I grew up I have lived a double life because when I was growing up I always wanted to be in a gang. I thought if I did get put on to be in a gang that I would earn respect, trust, power, weapons, drugs, girls, money and many other things.

So one day I got locked up and I met two gang members I used to look up to and I asked them what do I have to do to be a part of your hood? They told me that I had to put in work on a few people, so I did. I beat the hell out of my roommate. Then they said it was ok to be part of the hood and I said ok.

So on Saturday, during searches, they came up in my room and asked me: are you ready? And I said ok, so they beat the shhh out of me. So then I was in. But to make a long story short, I lied to my family and told them I don't bang anymore.

When I was at home I was a good kid, but on the streets I was a gang member, and it messed up my life. Well, I got to go. Peace.

-Rodney, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Rodney, don't use that word - "peace", unless you mean it. There's no peace in the gang. Just to be in it you have to get the crap knocked out of you. You admit it's messed up your life. You can bet it's messed up the lives of the others in the gang, too. Do you know what kind of life you want? Do you want a messed up life. If not - step back. Think deeply about what you do want. There are lots of people who can help you get where you want to go, peacefully.

From Madness to Success

From Madness to Success
It's all in the mind

Think about what you gon' do
You either be successful
Or keep bangin' with that crew

I know it's hard
Without moms
Or pops

But your mind
Got to be strong,
Order to stay on top

We just young black
Men, who need some

Love

So instead of gettin'
Mad at each other,
Give a ninja a hug.

Just think about
When you in yo'
Cell at night,
And you think about
How much time you
Got and say damn
I wanna change my
Life.

Well guess what,
It's only right

-Lil' Dee, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope you follow your very good advice in this piece - and next time you have a chance to do right (by your block, by your family, by yourself), take it!

The Disappointment Blues

What is disappointment to you?

Disappointment to me is when you go to a closed store.
Disappointment is when your mom cries in court.

Disappointment to me is putting myself in this position.
Disappointment is when someone else controls your life.
Disappointment is when you only bathe for five minutes.
Disappointment is when you can't get up and go to the icebox when you want.

Disappointment is when you can't see your family.

Disappointment is when you wear county sneakers.
Disappointment is when you have to call your family collect.
Disappointment is when you get out and can't get a job.

What is disappointment to you?

-Solomen, Alameda

From The Beat: Disappointment to us is when we see intelligent young people like yourself keep coming back into juvenile hall wasting your life, instead of putting your minds to good use at school and doing other productive things with your lives!

The "B" Word

You say a conversation goes away? I disagree. The oldest way of keeping knowledge and tradition is by word of mouth, telling stories and fables to teach morals and tradition. A conversation is a fluctuating script and acting was one of the earliest forms of art.

Since arriving here I've heard nothing but "b's and "h's" The children always brag about how many "b's" they "got, when they ask how many I have my response is always "none."

I wouldn't ever want a girl with low enough self-esteem to allow me to refer to her as a "B". I have the companionship of a beautiful young woman. That's all I want.

-Kai, Alameda

From The Beat: Both your points are well taken, especially that last one about the young women and girls and the names they get called, or allow themselves to be called. Why and how do you think that even happens to begin with?

My Life

Well my life started by being cool, but until the age of 8 when my mom passed away. I was going through it and it still goes through my mind when people talk about their moms.

In 6th grade, I met my friend that now he's my best friend. We were both skaters until one day we got introduced to the gang. Then, I started wearing gang clothes. When I was wearing all the gang clothes, I started chilling with older homeboys that showed me a lot of respect. When I was chilling with them, I got into their 'hood at the a younger age.

Well now I'm still in the gang and how they say once you're in there's no ways out. I started going against my rivals. When I got caught by the police, I ended up in juvenile hall.

Pee-Wee, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. We understand how hard it must have been for you to grow up without the warmth of a mother. But, now you have to stop what you are doing and think about your life for a minute. This is not the life you deserve. Think about it! There are many who have gone through hard ones and have turned their lives around. They are now living a normal and better life. You can be another one. Gangs won't take you anywhere and you'll find out sooner or later. Might as well before than late. There is always a way out! Always!

Disappointment

It happens a lot.

It's something that happens so often that most people expect it more than they expect what they want. You walk in class expecting easy work.

Disappointment.

You go home expecting no chores. Disappointment.
You see a girl you like, and ask her out. Disappointment.
You do a crime and think you get away. Disappointment.

You wish you could live forever. Disappointment.

The list can go on forever because it's so common, but if you take all these disappointments and learn from them

it would get harder to get disappointed.

Not saying it still won't happen, because it will.

But take it as a lesson. I've been disappointed too many times,

but if you're strong, you can keep your head up.

So to all you Beat readers,
learn from your disappointments and keep your head up.
'Till I write again.

-Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well said BK. Life is a mix. And disappointment's part of it. It's how we handle it that counts. And we can learn to minimize the disappointments by learning to make wiser choices.

Disappointment

I really don't deal with disappointment. I get angry more than disappointed. What really makes me mad is when people tell me that they are going to do something, but do something else. I hate that. That is really irritating.

But anger is a different. The way I deal with anger is screaming in my pillow, throwing things, and acting like a brat.

My father disappoints me a lot. Ever since I was a baby, he's been a disappointment, so I don't even consider him being a father or a daddy. He is basically just a sperm donor. He just contributed to my existence. That is the biggest disappointment ever. But, yeah, I hate being disappointed.

-Knhwj, San Francisco

From The Beat: You definitely have good reasons to feel disappointed in the man who wants to call himself your father but who doesn't meet any of the definitions of "father" other than his contribution to your genetic make-up. (Unfortunately, this is far too common with far too many men.) But we're most interested in that first reason for disappointment, with those who say they're going to do something but don't do it. We wonder, have you ever said you weren't going to come to juvenile hall? Or you weren't going to get caught by the police? Or you were going to make changes that you didn't follow through on? In other words, are you ever disappointed in yourself?

Disappointed In Myself

I'm a kick y'all a little disappointment story. It was about two months ago when I was attending Tennyson High School. I knew most of the girls and dudes there, so about one month into school I start doing the most. My patnas was influencing me hella much. Basically I was scrapin' with the wrong crowd.

I'd just got out from doing 19 months and I was trying to beat probation, ya dig? But in my environment it's always that violent boy vibe. That's what gets me in trouble.

But anyways, one day I was walking to lunch and I asked this goni lala that I knew since middle school to buy me a lunch. Then she started cursing me out. I was going along with it, but after about five minutes I started to realize she was serious. After I noticed she was taking it too far I told her like this: I was just playin' sis. I got a baf in my pocket. But she kept calling out my name and disrespecting me to the fifth.. So I entered her face. We were both arguing for like 10 minutes. That when I said - look ma, if you call out my name one more time I'm 'bout to slap the dog shhh out of you. And she kept up with it, trying to make me look dumb in front of everybody at lunch. Then she called me the b word. After that it was a wrap. I gave her a right hook to the face, then a left to the chin.

Although I was angry at the time, now that I'm locked up, I really want to apologize to that girl. I should never have put my hands on a female, because if it wasn't for a female, I would never have been here.

So, to all the females in the world - I apologize for disrespecting you in any way, shape, or form. Y'all the most beautiful creation God made.

I'm most disappointed in myself for letting her get to me. I know I'm bigger than that, plus I was on my a-game. Now I'm gonna know where my ego will put me next time.

To all, keep it solid! Good night Beat readers.

-Phatty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That was a hard lesson, P. We hope the young woman you assaulted is OK. And we hope you'll learn to just walk away from gnarly situations like that. Walking away from trouble is often more courageous than jumping into it. Work on controlling yourself young man!!

Mis Consejos Hacia Ti

No le tengo envidia a las demás personas. En la otra parte, me conformo con lo que Dios me ha dado. Les doy un consejo, conformense con lo que Dios les ha dado y no sean inconforme.

En mi vida, a mi me hubiera gustado escuchar los consejos de las personas mayores. Ahora les dare unos consejos: no se metan a los vicios de las drogas. Alejense lo más que puedan de esos vicios.

Otro consejo es que busquen a Dios. El sí te dará lo bueno y lo mejor. El tiene cosas grandes para ti. El ama. El tiene planes para ti. El te dará vida eterna.

Obedece a tus padres, respetalos, hazle caso, has el bien y no mires a quien. Hazlo sin recibir nada a cambio porque hoy tú haces un favor mañana te pueden hacer uno a ti. Escoje el camino del bien para que en el día de mañana, puedas ser alguien en la vida. Suerte!

From The Beat: Que lindo consejos! ¿Quien o que te inspiró a dar estos consejos? Esperamos que tal como ellos tú también aprendas sobre esos mismos consejos. No te desvies del camino bueno en que andas. Vas por buen camino, te deseamos lo mejor también.

My Advices To You

I don't envy other people. On the other hand, I am satisfied with what God gave me. I'm going to give you an advice, be pleased with what God has given you and don't be unsatisfied.

In my life, I would have liked to listen to the advice of other older people. Now, I'm going to give you another advice: don't mess with drugs. Get as far away as you can from those bad habits.

Another advice would be to look for God. He will give you what's good and the best. He has big things planned for you. He will give you eternal life.

Obey your parents, listen to them, do what's right and don't look back to others. Do it without expecting to receive something back because if today you do a favor, tomorrow they might do you one. Choose the right road, so the day of tomorrow you can become someone in life. Good luck!

-Francisco, San Francisco

From The Beat: Those are good and wise advices. Who or what inspired you to give these advices out? We hope you to learn from those advices as well. Don't misguide yourself from the good road you are heading. You're on the right road. We wish you the best. And we also hope someone get your point.

Why Did I Cause My Mom so Much Pain?

My dad is like a stranger 'cause the only person whoever took care of me was my mom. My dad would walk in and out of my life like a stranger. He didn't do anything to support me, but my mom did so much for me.

I caused her too much pain by getting locked up, getting high and drunk, doing crimes, involving myself in gangs. Now I regret what I did 'cause now I'm in juvi and I have time

to think about how much pain I caused her.

This goes out to my mom.

I want her to know that I love her and no one could ever replace her.

-Lil' Moose, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Throughout your piece, we can imagine how hard your mother has done to raise you without any support. We think it's time for you to start giving back to her some of the effort she has done for you. You know what you can do to pay all she has done for you. Touch your heart and you'll know. Good luck! We're proud of your mom like you are. Now make her proud of you.

She Got The Kid Wide Open

Baby we just hung up, talked about so much, but it was
 only fifteen/thirty minutes just hearin' yo' voice,
 keeps me from giving out beatin's
 When lights say eyes out, me and you together is what I see
 Some say you got me wrapped but in reality I'm not sure
 but I do know
 She got The Kid wide open
 People never wanted us together,
 But look at us four and a half months later
 And they still hatin'
 I'm not worried 'bout none of it, I know how you feel.
 And you've always kept it real with me and at first I
 never saw s more than friends got shot down first try but
 got up and tried gain
 She got the kid wide open
 While I sit in this room in between classes,
 I close my eyes and I see a cute smile deserving more
 I'm gon' try my hardest
 Even if it messed up any and everything else
 Cause right now all that matters is us
 She got the kid wide open
 We've been together for a cool minute
 Most of it me bein' locked down
 But you still stay by my side through it all even moms
 say we should be together after all that's happened so
 everything else to me don't matter what everybody else say
 She got the kid wide open
 When I'm totally out, through doin' a lot now with you
 on my side, sayin' I'm forever ride or die
 So I'm gonna make it long as possible to keep you in my
 world... my life, my everything so just no it's me and you
 till the end of time
 'Cause she got The Kid wide open.

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: There's a saying "Before you can say 'I love you', you have to be able to say the 'I.'" Meaning, can you give this girl the love she deserves and needs without getting your own life together? Do you have your own life together? Because in this poem you say you'd "mess everything else up" to make it work. But is that a good idea?

How I Handle Things

How you doin'? Me? Great. Just chillin' in the halls! Not goin' anywhere soon... So anyhow, to answer your questions:
 How do I address my feelings? I keep everything to myself, so I basically don't address my feelings.
 How do I react to disappointment? Sometimes I get irritated and sometimes I feel let down and hurt, torn.
 Do I get angry? Of course, who doesn't?
 How do I handle my anger? I sometimes wait 'til I'm alone and I cry aloud and throw a tantrum, or I just keep it bottled up and ignore it.
 You want to know a time I was disappointed? Let's see. So one time I was talkin' to my sister on the phone, and she promised me she would come visit me on Saturday an' bring me some hot Cheeto Puffs and a Pepsi. When that day came, she didn't show up. And another time I was talkin' to my father on the phone and he told me that he would be in the city and that he would call me. So I waited a few days and when I called him, he didn't answer his phone. So I called my uncle an' found that he had been in the city for three days and he was at his son's house.

-Titi, San Francisco

From The Beat: You know, Titi, you don't have to answer each question we ask to write a good Beat piece. You just have to take the topic, think about it, then write the way you want to explain what you want to say. Still, we appreciate that you took this topic seriously and gave us good examples of your disappointments. It seems like what disappoints you most is when people don't keep their word, so can we ask you if you've given your word not to come back here? Will you disappoint yourself? We hope not.

Day Dreamer

See, girl I am not here to tell you no BS lies.
 I am here to keep it real, and tell you, you look real fly.
 You know I don't mean to be rude but I can't help but
 tell you,
 you look real good in those apple bottom jeans.
 Don't get the wrong idea, that's not why I came over for.
 I came over to talk to you
 My purpose here today is just to get to know you.
 I am not like all those other clowns who just want to get
 in those jeans.
 See me on the other hand,
 I am the type of guy who wants to get to know you,
 Be your friend, be your man,
 And even possibly see us in the future with a nice
 family,
 Livin' in a three story house with a white picket fence
 And a dog named Spike. Wow....

I can't believe I am daydreaming about me and Kimberly right now in Math class. Wow, I got to get a hold over myself right now, because she is way out of my league, and she is the most popular girl in school, and I am just a low life from the ghetto. She's a rich girl who moved here from Orange County, so I know I can't be her type. I bet her type is tall, tan with muscles, and comes from a wealthy family

I have one thing and that's the brains, looks and the personality. See this girl is between Alisha Keyes and Cassy off of Bad Boy Entertainment, she has the measurements of 34C, 23, 34, but that's not all she stands for. She also likes sports and has a great personality, and is down-to-earth, she's very smart, and there's me, a kid who loves to dance, who likes to keep my head in the books, likes to skateboard, and I like to shoot at things - in paintball tournaments!-

"HELLO! Excuse me, Mr. S! Are you paying any attention right now?"

Ah shhh, I am in it for now, stay tuned to see what's going to happen to Corey in his encounter with the teacher in class.

-Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: We'll be waiting for Part 2, and you are ANYTHING but "a low life from the ghetto" and if you just stay true to who you are, the real you, you will find the girl of your dreams eventually. Just wait - true love will find you!

Dealing with Anger

It's hard you know, dealing with anger. But it can be handled because anger isn't necessarily bad; anger can help you sometimes and protect the ones you love.

One time my cousin and I were walking home from a quinceñera and I stopped to light up a cigarette.

My cousin went along when I looked up again and saw two others come up and hit him in the face and right there I lost it. I ran up and knocked out the first person then grabbed the other off my cousin and just let loose, I mean badly.

Afterwards I looked at my hand and saw the cigarette had burned my hand and my white tee was full of blood. After I helped my cousin up and he was like, "damn, those fools were like twenty, twenty-two!"

I was like, "I ain't never gonna let no one no matter how big, mess with you!"

-Stefon the Don, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Anger is a powerful motivational tool. We all know what it's like to "lose it". All of the sudden, an inner switch is turned on and we act almost without thought. Using anger as a source of strength can take you a long way, but it has its limits. What happens in a situation that angers you but requires you to think calmly and logically to survive? How would you handle this Stefon?

My life

I started to be in the system when I was about 10 or 11 years old. I lived in San Jose and was chilling with my homies and got caught up for burglary, which wasn't worth it.

Well, I was around my uncles and I started smoking stoggies when I was 10. After that, I turned to weed when I was about 11.

My family was into slanging pills, meth, weed, anything – and that's where I'd get my connects from.

I started poppin pills when I was 12 years old and I just got addicted.

I got into my first fight when I was in the 4th grade. My uncles and cousins came through and since I was raised around guys, they'd tell me to beat her ass or I'd get my ass hurt by them. I smashed on the chick and since then, my love for fighting grew.

Since I'm half Vietnamese and Mexican, I grew up with different gangs and I was well-respected and known around the hood.

I later took on the family business of slanging drugs when I was a young teen.

I have gotten into more and more fights and been charged with "assault with battery" charges. One day a guy from a rival gang disrespected me and my homies picked me up and saw the fool walking, got out of the car and stabbed him. I later was charged for another assault. I was on house arrest for months and I got into another fight that led me here. Well I guess I'm gonna continue later. Keep ya head up!

-Krissey, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Maybe you ran out of time when you were able to talk about the future and how you want to change, because that seems to be missing. But after hearing about your family history and your past, we wonder how you see yourself and what you have learned from being locked up.

My Rhyme

Yo check out my rhyme
It'll be just a minute of your time
Right now I wish I can smoke a dime
But I know it's a crime

'Cause now I'm sittin' here in a cell
Startin' to look pale
Thinkin' I'm in hell
But I'm really in a teenage jail

I know I never wanted any of this shhh
And now I'm a ninjette stuck in the pit
Now there's a goal I wanna set
It's to quit play'in with bullshhh

Even though my parents don't care about me
I'm gonna succeed and be what I can be
'Cause at the end its gonna be them needin' me
And I ain't gonna be there to hear their plea

Well let me tell you how it is behind these walls
It's hard when every one reject my calls
With hands behind my back as I walk threw these halls
Now I know not to be breakin' them laws

- Shenee, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It was a very good rhyme, but now its time to do as you say. Succeed change your life and stay out of these teenage jails. Find the right path to a better life

Stuck

I was raised on these blocks

Glock's always cocked

Running from cops and slanging these rocks

Bustin' shots fools get popped

Homies get locked snitches get dropped

Homies down to ride

Homies in the varrio never bark but always bite

Always takin' flight keep this game locked tight

Put in jail for the varrio fight

For what I think is right

Livin' it fast getting' killed young

That's how it is when you pick up that gun

Puttin' in work in for the G's now he lays six feet deep

It was a ugly murder seen

Now his homies on the creep they lookin' for vengeance

They lookin' for me

This shhh ain't gonna stop 'till I D.I.E.

'Till I'm in my casket in eternal sleep

But I stood for the hood through the bad and the good

Puttin' it down for the varrio like the way that I should

I got love for my family

I got love for my friends

We gonna get through this bull 'till we get to the end

Im gonna try to do good, but I'm stuck like a hook

I'm just another soul in this world that got stuck in the hood

- Lil' Vago, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Interesting rap Vago, but keep in mind if you glorify gangs, drugs and violence it will get only one of two thing, Death or prison. Don't be just another soul stuck in the hood; make a change to better your life. Pull your hook and find a better life then the one you have been living.

That One Day

I feel like I can't go on

I feel like I'm in this world alone

I close my eyes and wish I was home

Then I open them and that feeling is gone

Thinking, how did I end up this way?

Remembering, it all started that one day

Wishing I could turn back the hand of time

Now wishing I didn't commit that crime

All these thoughts run thru my mind

That's all I do is think 'cause I have nothing but time

Reminiscing on all the fun times I had

Getting pissed off at the world 'cause I never had a dad

Funk it I don't need that ninja

Him being gone made me more strong and bigger

Now I got a family of my own

Time to stop acting childish and start acting grown

I'm going to change for multiple reasons

For my girl, my baby, and my moms so her pain could start easing

A lot of people tell me that I'm someone

Special is this why I get tempted by the devil?

I don't know only time can tell

Whether I go to heaven or burn for eternity in hell

But I know one thing

My love for you will never fell.

-Yj, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We all wish to turn back time to fix our errors or to never have done it. Unfortunately that's impossible, but the bright side about it is that we learn from those mistakes. Learning from those mistakes, make us see the consequences negative actions come with. Like you said, you don't need a dad because you already have your own family. You are the man of the house and they need home. You are a father and your kid deserve to a father you didn't have. Break the cycle and don't spin. Everything is possible when having motivations. And you see many throughout this writing.

Disappointment In Others

I get disappointed when ninjas not solid, when they brag about what they do. When people do something and get caught up and snitch on ninjas, that shhh get me hella disappointed. But yeah, that's why I don't [have] friends... nothing but family.

- Nacho cheese

From The Beat: Snitching is just a part of that thing cat's keep calling "the game." You don't know who's who until the system throws out that twenty-five years with an L and says tell us everything or else. All of that hard, goon, gangsta crap flies out of the window and reality sets in real quick. But cats keep playing though. Wake up and worry about you!

In Take

What's up Beat?

In and out of jail in this little cell
Thinking what the hell don't get no bail
Saying "damn I failed"

A knock on the window you got mail
Sleeping and dreaming

Females are singing, phone keeps ringing
No release, No walk down your street,
Nobody to say there's little Reese the beast
Because camp is my release.

-Reese

From The Beat: Sounds like a case of the "jail house blues!" Better times are ahead. When they come, don't forget where you were and how much you don't want to go back there.

A Big Change Is Coming

I've only got three and a half months left to be here, and then I get released. June 10, 2008, I'll be 18.

I've been coming here since 2004, five years non-stop. I've learned a lot through these five years. I've been on every type of probation, eight group homes, and cut from every single one. I lived fast and raw, I've had a sick life, but I'll be 18, and that means I'll have a lot of responsibility ... I'll be a man. I got to take care of my family... man I might get out and have three kids! I'm going to go to school adult school.

In Redwood City then I'll go to Skyline College to get certified as a mechanic and then it's straight to work, I got to keep gangbangng separate from daily life ... I got to keep my head up and make a change. I'm in love with my hyna, and I won't say her name, plus no one needs to know her, but me.

-Smokey

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a plan to make it, and that's a beautiful thing. But can you really keep gangbangng "separate" from daily life, with everything it requires and how much warfare it brings in? What about giving it up entirely? If you are serious about what you say in this piece, that is what you will have to do. Peace.

Life Before I Had Cell Phone!

Man I remember back when I was almost a teen, I use to have to get those important calls from my girls. I use to have to be at my house damn near all day. Man, my mom use to always complain about me being in the house talking on the phone to girls all day.

But after that my mom bought me a cell phone and it was over! Man I always was on my Metro... Man I stayed talking to hella different females.

- Mee Too

From The Beat: And now? Hmm, maybe that cell phone wasn't so cool after all. If you'd stayed talking on the house phone "all day" and not out running around getting into trouble you'd still be chopping it up out here and not in there. Come on home and get on point Man. Time to stand up.

Disappointment

When I am disappointed I be depressed.

-Edward

From The Beat: Okay, that's a good start... and when you're depressed what do you do to get rid of it: exercise, write, cry, fight, sleep-it-off? What do you do?

Love Can Hurt

Let me tell you 'bout my love life! On Dec 06, '07 I found the love of my life! Well , Dec. 6 was when I lost my virginity to this boy named Bones.... After me and him done, I felt a connection I never felt before. ... Right then I knew I really loved him. But I have to admit love is complicated and mixed with pain, and when I first lost my virginity to him I didn't even go out with him until Jan. 18, '08. But the thing that hurt me the most is when he went to Juvenile Hall, in a week...after I lost my virginity.

But I always been there for him. But our relationship went good, but I heard he was talking to this other girl. But I was cool with it. Then he broke up with me, he broke my heart and then I went up in the hall, but he was the first person to write me and be here for me. I love him for that. Until this day I love him very much!

-Kachetes

From The Beat: We hope you that this boy shapes up and treats you with the respect you deserve. It's one thing to write from jail when you're locked up and feeling bad, it's another when he's out in the free world showing disrespect for your feelings. Remember, actions speak louder than words!

Still Hanging

All you see is bright flares when I get cold stares

People love talking shh but I don't really care

They stay all up on mines they need to go elsewhere
So they can elevate their game take a climb upstairs.

My games already up so you can say that I'm high
And I don't use Visine 'cause the drops play with my eyes
I ain't talking about high like a scrape sitting on fours
I'm talking about grapes that keep me strapped like
Girbauds

Yeah you can say that I am

But it's only 'cause I'm different like the green eggs and ham.

-Gumby

From The Beat: We had to cut out a few things due to... well, you know why. Anyway, "different," huh? Sitting up in juvi, talking crap about how tough you think you are, getting high and how you "get down." Yeah, that's original. Come with something else cause that's played out. You have great rhyming skills and sometimes you come with some great pieces but you can't keep bragging and boasting about the criminal lifestyle. We bet if you wish you could get a POW every week, yet it is your call.

I Need My Cell Phone

Cell phones have not created any problems but I need my phone so I can call my girls and family and friends. And I kind of got tired of asking people if [I could use their] phone to call someone or having to walk to the store to use the phone and call some one.

So yeah, I need my cell phone to keep in contact with people but being in here I can't talk to any one except the people here. I need to talk to someone I know [on the outside] but they wont let me use the phone and it sucks a lot but I can deal with it for now.

-B

From The Beat: Just another one of the consequences of being locked up. You can't do what you want to do. You have to do what they tell you to and when they tell you to do it. Get out of there and stay on track so you wont have to worry about being disconnected from your folks like that, B!

Free Again

What's up Beat? This is your girl Melissa. Well today is a day out after me and my baby's one month anniversary. We both locked up, and I'm hella mad because today I found out that he got into a high-speed chase with three of his patnas and my boyfriend got his head busted.

Damn, I was crying when I heard that today. Because my boyfriend was on the run for like a month and I told him to keep his lil' butt outta the streets. But I guess he wanted to do a foo' and get locked up with me...

As I think of it my baby could have died from that high speed, but thank God his life wasn't taken, because that's my baby and I love him and I miss him.

Baby, you and me will be free again.

-Melissa

From The Beat: This piece ends on that hope, hope for freedom. But what does freedom mean to you? Does it mean freedom to be with your man, freedom to get out of the house, freedom from drama, freedom from fear and stress? What is freedom?

What Keeps Me Up At Night

What keeps me up at night is me having to wake up every night to these four walls everyday and every morning. What really irks me is when I know I'm going to be up in here for a long time and that I probably won't be getting out no time soon.

When you wake up to some shhh like this every morning, knowing that you aint gone see the Sun, you aint gone see your mama, only on visiting day. Knowing that you probably going to the Y. The only thing I could do is keep my head up. But it's good, I'm gonna hold it down.

-Lil' Co

From The Beat: We feel you Lil' Co. We do, for real-for real. Don't let the walls cave in on you. You have to fortify your mind and never lose sight of YOU... no matter what your surroundings are... no matter what! Feel that? If not, read it again and think real hard about it. Keep your head up! Focus!

Game Face

Yeah, I live a double life. I'm a young hitta at all times. Stay on top. Yeah I could be a criminal but that's my last choice.

But don't get it twisted, another side of me loves the Lord. I love Jesus and any day I'll pick good before bad, but for me I've been doing bad for so long, it's way too hard to do good.

So honestly, I know it ain't good but I know who I am, I'm a young hitta 'bout my business. It's a time to play but you gotta know when to put your game face on.

-Lil' Dj

From The Beat: It sounds like you are split in two different directions. Eventually, you will have to choose between these two sides — does being in jail push you in one direction or another?

Being Geeked Up

Being geeked up go skitz man. I use to stay geeked up out there off hella drank and dro. You know how life is on them streets 5-0 always be on us young goons out there. I gotta stay geeked up. I wanna get low but I don't know how. Ya dig? Help me. Help me.

-Lil' Geek

From The Beat: Well being high and drunk might not be conducive to staying beneath the system's radar. When you let go of that goon mentality you'll start seeing things go your way instead of being blown around in whatever direction like a wave in the wind. You have to demonstrate that you want to change first... then people who actually see you trying will be moved to help you. But it starts with you.

The Way I Talk

When I'm with my potnas I talk differently then when I'm with my parents. I talk to my parents with respect and I don't cuss around them or any other adults. I treat them with respect.

-Kiwi

From The Beat: How far does that respect go? For instance, when your parents tell you to stay out of trouble do you respect that? Hmm, just something to think about.

My Life

What's up Beat? This your homie Chikillo. I'm just gonna write about how my life going. Well, I'm just here in the hall doing time for a crime I did. I go to court tomorrow. The judge trying to send me away but I just want a last chance to be with my family and with my homies, especially with my son.

I been here for a few months and I miss my freedom. Well you know I'm just gonna do my time and not try to come back to the hall and stay out with the homies kicking it. Well Beat, I'm gone. Late!

-Chikillo

From The Beat: You should be staying away from the homies and looking after the life you brought into the world. That's what's up! Kicking it with the homies doesn't sound like you're going to be "trying" to stay out of jail. Quit playing dude... you got a child now. Focus. Your son should be at the top of your priority list, not second or third.

I Don't Wait

I never had to wait for hours at home just to wait for someone to call me, because I never gave nobody my house phone number, I haven't used no pay phone because I don't need to.

Whenever I'm gonna meet somebody, I just call them and tell them to meet me at a certain time. But now that I'm older, we do need a cell phone because I know I have a lot of people that needs to call me when they need something or when they want to kick it with me.

The reason I have Metro PCS is because I have no minutes I can talk all I want.

-Talker

From The Beat: Do you spend more time on the phone, or more time texting? Do feel like you need to have your phone with you at all times?

Disappointment In Myself

Being here is just not the way. You can't spend all your life up in here. I mean I can't be mad at no one because you know what you got yourself into.

In fact, I know that these streets aint for me. I really can't do anything about it. I'm just doing my time and just trying to get out of here.

-Jorge

From The Beat: You can do something about it. You can figure out a plan or strategy to keep yourself out of harms way so when you get out you don't return to juvenile hall. You know the traps are out here waiting for you. What can you do to avoid them?

The Squad Time

I remember when me my boys was at my house and we was off some alcohol and they was taking pictures, and they took a picture of me and I threw up hella bad. Them was the good times.

-Chill

From The Beat: Hopefully you'll get out of there and let those type of good times be a reminder of why you don't want to go back. Stay out of trouble.

I Would Give Him My Kidney

I got worried about someone when I got word that my nephew was in the hospital and he was having problems with his kidneys. When my mama told me that it was an infection the first thing that came out of my mouth was I would give him my kidney. My nephew is my pride and joy if I lose him I would lose it.

I already lost my niece!

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: You need to remember the sacrifice you were willing to make, and think about how badly that little boy needs you to be out with them, showing him the way to manhood out in the free world. He needs people who love him nearby!

The Life I Live Made Me Like This

I have a double life, because I live like a criminal and at the same time I be a gentlemen. When I used to go to the house I would try to be a gentlemen with my family, and when I go to the street I am a different person, like if you see me you would tell me "who are you." Also when I go to my friends' house, I act all different so they could see I got respect.

To tell you the truth, I am a really emotional person, because I ain't mean but the life I live made me like this.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Would you consider changing your life then? Because it sounds like you don't really like the person you become when you are out in the street, almost as if he is not the real you.

Bow To No Man

Call the coroner, not the doctor
I warned you about these choppa's
Triple homicide police chose including two helicopters
I bow down to no man
And that includes the coppers
-Four Walls Entertainment

-T-Rex

From The Beat: The problem is that real freedom means doing the right thing. And if you do the right thing, you won't have to face the cops anyway. We want to see you stand up and fight, but you have to know what you're fighting FOR, not just what you're fighting against.

Brown Skin

The skin of my lady is beautiful fair
It smells so sweet, like after rain air
Her lips are so soft, as soft as a cloud
Whenever we kiss, my heart screams aloud
Her skin is so soft, as soft as a pillow
Her stare is so calm, as calm as a willow
No matter what happens, whatever goes down
Her skin will stay beautiful, beautiful brown.

-Eugene

From The Beat: Lucky girl! Is this someone you are already with, or someone you're dreaming of?

When I Get Out

When I get out of this juvenile hall I'm going to go home to my family and make up for the time I lost when I was in here. Man, I miss my family. I mostly miss my mom cause she was the one who came to my court date and shhh. When I get out we're going to throw a big party.

-Correy

From The Beat: On top of that party you might want to demonstrate how much you appreciate her by staying away from and out of trouble.

Double Lifestyle

I would choose my gang life over a normal life because I want to live in the fast lane. I want to live a happy life to but it's to far away from gang life.

I would rather die fast by a bullet than slow when I'm old. I choose this because my bloodline started it. It goes two generations back and because I was born in the middle of the hood.

-Richard

From The Beat: We were under the impression that people wanted a better life for themselves and their families. Like, that's why people hustle and bustle for the cash out there. It's not to stay in the "hood" it's to get out of the hood and create a foundation for their children to grow up in a safe and healthy environment so that they can have a chance and an opportunity to make it in this world. Wake up!

Grandma RIP

Disappointment to me is just being in Juvy and not being able to see your family and friends or being able to be free.

The first time I felt disappointed was when my grandma passed away when I was younger. Ever since she passed away, I felt disappointment because it's not the same since she's gone, cause she misses my birthday, Christmas, and other holidays.

-Lonnie Bo

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your grandma. What do you miss most about her, and what is the greatest advice she ever gave you?

I Promise You

Roses are Red
Violets are blue
Life could be sweet
And so are you
Love is nice
So wait until tonight
I promise you that I will not bite

-Jerm The Worm

From The Beat: You are becoming the master of the love poem - but we want to see you expand your range, and use that talent on every subject that matters to you!

Loss

Hey Beat, this Lil' Leek. I just want to tell people that the hall is nothing, but it's not fun to be in. I just want to get out, so I could see all the girls.

To be free is the best thing 'cause you could do what you want, so when you get out stay out. That's coming from me.

RIP Emmitt, RIP Carl man, RIP to everybody gone and dead so bye.

-Lil' Leek

From The Beat: Um hmm, the hall is doing exactly what's it's supposed to be doing: Making you think about what freedoms you forfeit when you break the law. Don't get us twisted... we don't want you to be there either, but you have to want to not be there bad enough to stay out of trouble. It's not supposed to be Disneyland.

Disappointment

I remember I use to ride around the hood when I first got my new car. It was hot but I had a lot of haters and was finkin' too hard in it. I rode into the wrong hood in it and my new car got shot up. Man, I thought I was gonna die but I didn't.

-D

From The Beat: See what happens when you front? You can't floss when you have beef... especially in a new car. Come on now!

Disappointment

This is how I feel
I'm dark in the inside but man I'm so real.
Get angry but be mad at yourself
For you the one who got tangled in this belt
For I am the one who is on my own
I'm not turned off cause I stay on
What y'all said I'm gone make it on my own!

-Lil' Guan

From The Beat: Independence is a good thing... it says that you have confidence and belief in yourself. It also says that you're a responsible individual. It's okay at times to feel that darkness you spoke of. It lets you know that you're still human. Keep writing!

Sunny Days

When it's a sunny day I wonder what my friends are doing 'cause I know when its rainy days they're up in their room just like I am... bored, waiting 'till its good to go out. They're probably living the life. The life is the ghetto life. Meaning doing everything a ghetto person, or a person who's on the inside is doing.

-Spider

From The Beat: Do you mean to say that they are out here struggling and thinking about freedom? Maybe they're at school or at a movie not tripping off anything but how good it feels to not be locked up! Hmm, maybe? But you won't know for sure until you get out.

Living The Double Life Lifestyle

I do live the double life because on the outs grown folks see me as a young decent person who is very helpful, who goes to school, play sports and who is a regular school boy.

And to my friends I'm bad and a gang-banger who does bad things to people. The real me is the decent good school boy but on the outside I run this shhh

-Teddy

From The Beat: Is it possible for both these sides of you to co-exist peacefully? Or is the rough side of you going to ruin things for the 'decent' side of you?

Hell and Back

I'm a soldja
Born into this world for a cause
Been through hell and back
But it's nothin' to a boss
So for all my generals and lieutenants
Stay strong
And remember...

-Jamil

From The Beat: Remember what? We are waiting for the conclusion!!!

Which Way

I would choose the gangbanging life. It can still provide good things you will have by your side, and they will always have your back.

It will also get you locked up. You will have homies that are ready to get down whenever you are. That is why I would choose that life style. This is what us Mexicans stand for. Cesar Chavez is the founder of Huelga.

-Rudy

From The Beat: Cesar Chavez wasn't indiscriminately killing off his own people. In fact, he fought to make sure his people, no, all people, could get fare treatment on the workforce and not be exploited by the system. And as far as the homies go, how many of them are breaking their backs to write you or come to court for you?

Go Dumb?

I'm good, girls stay up. Man, when I get out we gon' go dumb. Man, I'm tired of being in here. Man, don't trip girls we gon' go dumb.

-Kenyon

From The Beat: Wow, you probably need to "go smart" for a change. It might help instead of harm you in the long run.

Your Girl n The Weekend, But What Does She Do During The Week?

It's kind of hard being at camp when ya chick is out there in Oakland doin' it with her people Monday through Friday, while you in camp and roll call gettin' counted like sheep every thirty minutes and gettin' stressed out by staff.

You trying to avoid write-ups to get all your hours to see them, and they out getting drunk and high getting into relationships! But I know ninjas be talking 'bout "my chick on me but she don't drink or smoke." But I seen it, they do it all on the week and put on act on the weekend, so that's why I am out.

It's Majie Go Baby, and don't take out the "Go Baby" 'cause it's me, me, me, it's all 'bout me, chicks get played like a Nintendo Wii.

-Majia Go Baby

From The Beat: We had some debate in the office on whether or not to keep the last part of your piece, but we decided to leave it... because obviously you have seen some examples of broken trust. But straight up - if a person wants his girl to be faithful, he needs to man up and get it together so he won't get put in jail. A girl deserves a boyfriend who is there for her seven days a week, not just on the weekends.

Not All

Not all unemployed are lazy
Not all dropouts are dumb
Not all married couples are happy
And not all homeless are bums

-Lil' Mang

From The Beat: Not all talents produce/Or live up to the talent they got/ They write pages and pages for weeks/And then when we say "did you write?" they did not!

Beautiful

You're beautiful like a butterfly
When I see your beautiful face I smile
Thinkin' about you makes me go wild
When I lie to you I'm in denial
So I must tell the truth
I romance about knockin' the boots
You're sweet as a honey bee
I am searching the bottom of the sea or the tallest tree
But baby, they don't make 'em like me please
When I look into your eyes
I feel like I can fly
Now I sometimes wonder why
The way those pants hug those hips
Makes me lick them lips
You're gorgeous as a rose
That's my favorite flower
I feel your skin so soft and smooth
But baby I hope you never have to choose
You're beautiful...

-Go Diego Do

From The Beat: We hope there's a lucky girl who did inspire this poem, and we hope that you if there isn't, you get out and find one! This poem will win her, but it's your ability to stay true that will keep her.

What Keeps Me Here

What's good Beat, I'm at camp, hella bored and doing nothing but getting mad at staff and trying to stay and do this camp thing I hate this place having to take a doo-doo right next to someone and a shower and sleepy next to more than a hundred guys make me want to run.

But I know I can't run because it's just going to make everything worse for me. In 12 days I get my first hour, so I'm going to stay and do this little seven months.

The Things That Make Me Stay: My family, the homies.

And that's all that makes me stay in this goddamned camp and that's on the real.

-Jj

From The Beat: It's good that you know what you have found reasons to stick out the program. And while you are here, take advantage of every single program you can. Get as much out of the system as possible!

Stay Safe

What's up Beat, this is Guero from San Francisco, 'bout to get out of camp in a month and a half ... if I don't get into a fight or a dirty. I'm cool today.

The only thing I'm trippin' off is my homie. He got shot with a shotgun in his back. He has hella beads in his back and go to his liver. In a couple of years he can be slower and some other shhh. I don't know, I hope the best for him.

Stay up and when you get out be safe, watch out for moving cars, even people walking.

-Guero

From The Beat: We could say the same to you - it's hot out there, and when you let yourself get caught up in beef, it gets hotter. Do you have a strategy for staying safe?

Don't Call Me Back Again!

Cell phones it's all right, I mean I like having a cell phone but at the same time it's annoying. I like having a cell phone because I got to call whoever I want at any time instead of bumming off someone else's phone. I don't like cell phones ,because I be having hella people blowing up my phone, feel me, once I don't pick up don't call me back again..

What do you think , I will pick up the phone the second time?

-Linh

From The Beat: Ah, the price of popularity. Do you ever think that having that cell phone makes so many demands on your time that it becomes harder to get things done when you need to? Like work, school, etc?

Just Words: "In Some Deep Stuff!"

It's your boy Looney once again, coming to drop some lines from Camp. I've been good here now for two months and I'm planning on doing good for the rest of my program too.

Last week I had eleven days until the baby was here and now he'll be here in four days or less.

I'm dummy juiced about the whole "being a father" thing. My patna up here just had his baby the other day... he said "It was cool, but I'm in some deep stuff"—LOL -- so I'm just waiting. The homies up here are doing good, so they're helping me with my stress level.

But I don't really have much else to say right now, so I'll holla.

-Looney

From The Beat: Well, you're in some deep stuff now for sure, but you also have a purpose and meaning coming to your life that you've never had before. Do you think a lot will change in your life now?

Snitching

What's up Beat, this is Lil' Capy. Well I really don't got nothing to write about I'm just gonna write about how I'm feeling today, well I'm not that coo'. I got a letter today talking about a homie that was hella coo' with snitched on someone... It's always the last person you expect.

The cops try to scare you by telling you they will give you life in prison or they say your homie snitched on you, so you can tell on him.

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: Seems like the best way to avoid the snitch problem is to just NOT DO the kinds of things a snitching could get you in trouble for, right? But you know that already, don't you?

No Family

Dear Beat,

I am disappointed because I have so much going for me, and I take it for granted.

I have never lived with my parents I have no family, I have been living in group homes and foster homes since I was four. If you were to look at me or talk to me you would think that my parents have given me home training. I am a senior in high school with enough credits to walk the stage, I work for a church that also comes to this juvenile hall to talk to kids I have bank accounts.

-Young but mature

From The Beat: Don't all those disappointments make you even more proud of what you have achieved? It takes a lot of strength to raise yourself, which is what it sounds like you did. And you found a church, you studied at school. Do you feel proud of yourself for what you have done in life already?.

Everyday Stuff

The dark side in Oakland is the same thing:

Guns, drugs, hitting up a dice game.

Trying to graduate but the exit exam's holding me back

Damn man why they won't cut me no slack?

Three relatives in college, man I wish that could be me

Scared for the diploma I might not see

Cold steel on my hip to get rid of the haters,

Never thought I would be in this situation when I was a first grader.

Taught to never love nothing but my hood.

Females cry at night wishing I understood.

My big sis Nee-Nee cried when I went down that day.

She told me not to mess with that ninja ...I knew he was a stray.

Pops told me only family is real.

Messing with fake ninjas would get you in here.

-Derrick

From The Beat: But Derrick, you have all you need to make it: Your own talent, which we can see in your writing, examples of people who have gone to college in your own family, and for that matter, a loving family who will support you in your dreams. Does knowing this help you feel more confident?

Disappointment No Thanks, I'll Stay Mad

Me, I rather get mad than disappointed. Disappointment is way worse than angry. I got disappointed because of my nephew. He went to Juvenile Hall. It's his first time, he got a home invasion and kidnapping case.

I didn't even get mad, I just got disappointed because I thought he knew better than that, I thought hew as smarter. I hope he gets out though.

-Linh

From The Beat: The thing is that your nephew looks up to his older family members, he will follow the examples that you all set, right? So maybe if you start doing right, HE will start doing right.

Texting

The only time I text is when I see where's my patnas are at and what they finna get into. I rather talk on the phone though because if I hear a person's voice I know what they up to and what mood they're in.

-Linh

From The Beat: They say that 95% of all communication is non-verbal, which means that like you say, the words themselves aren't enough, you can tell a lot about a person from their faces, tone of voice, how they are standing etc...Do you agree with that?

Release Time

I think I should be getting a release soon to camp, but you know how they get down with them thirty day wait thangs...so ninjas won't be thinking bout running or nothing.

-Time is near

From The Beat: How are you going to use those thirty days? To study? To write letters? To do extra homework? To plan for your future? Look at those thirty days as a chance to be thirty days ahead of the game when you get to camp!

Cell Phones Help People

Cell phones has helped a lot because when there weren't any cell phones and you're in the middle of nowhere and you get shot, how are you going to get help? Instead you're going to die.

Cell phones are always helpful because if you don't want to talk at your house you want to wander around and talk whenever you want. It has also helped because anybody can call you anytime without anybody in your business --this is why cell phones have helped a lot of people.

-J

From The Beat: How old were you when you got your first cell phone? How old do you think is the right age for a child to get one

Disappointed In The System

I am mostly disappointed in the way the probation officer and the judge are handling things right now, they are punishing me and recommending things like I am a threat to society, but I am mostly a threat to myself and my well being. They say they wanna put me in a group home, but at the same time they never had to come find me.

I've turned myself in the only two times I've ever violated, and have never went on the run and the baddest thing I've done is come with a couple dirty drug tests. That to me seems like no reason to take me away from my home.

-Malik

From The Beat: We definitely hope that you get home soon. What do you think makes them want to suggest that you could be a threat to yourself?

Hard To Control

Disappointment is hard to control, but how I address my feelings is that you have to fight back or get back at somebody.

Like one time I remember when I got into it at school and the boy said something about my dad, so I tripped out. The teacher got in my way and I punched him and assaulted the boy. I kept hitting him and hitting him ... another teacher came so I hit her.

But that's only because my dad died right in front of me and you know how hard that was ... I was disappointed at the whole world, that time I didn't know what to do.

My mom never was there so that incident happened, I got kicked out of Rudsdale Academy, so after that I started to go to jail time after time so that the real reason I get disappointed 'cause my dad but now I can control my anger its hard but I have to 'cause it didn't get me nowhere but jail. RIP daddy ...this for you.

-Tavon

From The Beat: Do you have any kind of support for these feelings? Anger management classes? Family to give you advice? Dad must have been incredibly painful, but getting locked up just causes you more pain



Living A Confused Life: Interview

TBW: Do you live the double life?

Tay: Honestly man it gets rough out here where I'm from, so I gotta say I live kind of a triple life.

TBW: Explain how you live a triple life?

Tay: I say I live a triple life because I be having a lot of girls so I would say I got a lover side (not soft though), that's one. Then on the low-low I get money selling thangs for a cool price, some label me a hustler that's two then to most of my family, girlfriend mothers etc, and school staff I'm a regular kid with a steady environment that's smarter then the average youngsta out here, so that's three...

TBW: Living the triple life...does it create problems for you either at home or with your homies?

Tay: Yeah it creates problems all the time because of time. It seems like me and time don't got too much in common.

When I'm trying to get my hustle on, my mother need me to do this or that soon as I'm through my broad wanna kick it or do some thangs, if you know what I mean, plus while all that's going on I got homework.

TBW: Does it ever leave you confused?

Tay: No it don't ever leave me confused because I plan my moves very careful kinda like a game of chess against God for my life.

TBW: What do you do when your family wants to do one thing but your family want to do another?

Tay: I look at my homies as family but I go the way my blood tell me to because blood thicker then water.

TBW: Can you satisfy one part of your life without disappointing the other?

Tay: Always ...because all you gotta do is keep it real unless you lie for the better.

TBW: Are you struggling to give up this triple life and put both feet on one path or the other? Which will you choose?

Tay: No I am not trying to give up my triple life, and also no I'm not answering anymore questions!

-Tay

From The Beat: We wish you had answered even more questions, because this interview leaves us wanting to know more. There is only one of you to live these three lives, so something is going to have to fold soon... which life is it that got you in Juvenile Hall? And when you are in here, which one are you leading. And which life, deep down, is the one you are most proud of?

I Hate Living The Double Life

I am living a double life, I am a good person around my mom and my girl, but when I get in the streets I'm a whole new person. That's the reason why I'm in Juvy, 'cause I was acting up in the streets and got caught up.

I hate living the double life, 'cause now I'm in the hall and I can't see my girl and I can't see my mama. Living the double life isn't cool, 'cause my boys be wanting me to do things I wouldn't normally do, like rob someone, but on the other hand my mama be having me do right, like stay away from people like that.

So in the end, I am living the double life and when I get out of here I won't be living that life no more.

-Dj

From The Beat: Do you think maybe the problem is your "boys"? Do you have friends who are more positive, who will help you lead the kind of life you really want to live?

When I'm Disappointed I Pray

When I get disappointed I pray to God. I address my feelings by talking to God and hoping he will help me come to my senses. Yeah -- I get mad but after I pray I get sad. But soon I get OK. I was disappointed when the wrongfully accused me for pistol-whipping somebody.

I have disappointed my whole family by coming to Juvenile Hall. Yea I have a good and bad side but since I come from a good family I always do the right thing so the Angel wins!

-Chris

From The Beat: Nice - what kinds of plans are you working on to make sure that the Angel side of you gets stronger and stronger, so you can get out of the system and stay out?

Disappointment

I deal with disappointment by smoking weed, and drinking drank -- mostly sipping bo', and when I'm in a situation that do not go my way I do not address my feelings 'cause I usually be too high. I react to disappointment by mostly going to shoot dice or rob somebody because if I'm disappointed that usually mean I'm broke.

A time I was disappointed is when I ran from 5-0 and got caught so that's what disappointed me. I stayed quiet and beated on the walls 'cause I thought it would help. RIP Davon.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: If you keep living this way, you might find yourself with a lot more disappointment! You gotta find another way to deal with your life and your stress - do you have positive people around you who can help you?

I Ain't Comin' Back

What's up Beat, it's ya boy T back in the hall. I don't know why people think they hard just because they come to jail, they think it's cool to come in here and then they tell they friends that they been locked up, saying that they been here this many times that been smash and in here - but what is that doing good for you? I only been to jail three times and I ain't tryna come back. This ain't it. I'd rather be at home with my baby mama, my baby girl, my mom and pops and my annoying ass lil' sister.

But damn - it is what it is and sometimes you can't do nothing about it. But yeah I got court tomorrow and I got a pretty good feeling I'm getting out and all I gotta say is I ain't coming back.

-Young T

From The Beat: We hope you mean it, 'cause like you say, jail is no place to be, no place to be proud of, no place to return to. But what would you need to change to make sure you don't come back?

MARIN

I Got Away

What thizz it?" Yee! It's J on demand, like Comcast.

I'm 'bout to tell y'all a story about a time I got away from them boys (police.) We was at this party in Mill Valley, the whole turf. I popped a pill on the bus, in the function (party) and two halves, walking to the function. So you already know I was super lam (high). Anyway, we get into the party. We only there for, like, 45 minutes before the girl who party it was start screaming, "Everybody leave—the police are coming." I drop my orange juice and in my head, I'm like, "Oh, shhh. I can't go to the halls tonight."

I run around the party, tellin' my ninjas, "We gotta go. We gotta shake," and my ninjas goin' super bad on the female. She, like, "I didn't call them! It wasn't me!" and she was crying. I knew her, went to school with her, and all that, but I just couldn't feel sorry for her. It was like my compadres was sayin', "Why throw a party just to kick us out?"

Then her brother came, "Everybody out now!" He wasn't tough, though, he had on some tighty whities and a scarf. We was just laughin' at him. Then the girl came to me and said, "Jordan, you have to get these people out the house." She was still crying. I told my ninjas, but they wouldn't budge. I told other people. Nobody would leave, though, so I said, "Whatever," and sat on the couch and sipped some Tampico. I decided to smoke a Black and Mild, so I open the

door, 'bout to go outside, when I see big ass lights. It was the police. Girls screamed. Everybody ran outside. I see one of the potnas that was on the run. I tell him to leave. He said, "They can't arrest all of us."

I'm hella lam (high), following my ninjas around the house (it was hella big.) We go upstairs and hide in the girl' room. She came upstairs, screaming, and my cuddy cook was about to sleep her ass, but I told him not to. So we went back downstairs and people was walking around looking dumb, then I see my kinfolk being posted on the couch. I'm like, "What's wrong with you?" He say, "Don't worry 'bout me, lil' ninja. You betta shake," so I'm looking around and I go in the kitchen and there was a door. Get through there, it was a porch. I see my ninja, Dre, and they was over there, smoking a 'Port (Newport.) We shake from there.

I forgot what happened. I remember seein' all my ninjas at a Mexican restaurant down the hill from her house, and everybody was like, "Ayy! We got away." And I seen one of my potnas and they with this girl, so I hop in the car and do it movin', like a U-haul truck. But, yeah, that's it for my story. Stay up, heads up. Stop snitchin'. The whole nine— all gas, no breaks.

-Jordan

From The Beat: You're great at telling stories and you're having some great adventures, but where does this endless partying lead to? Did anyone get arrested? By the way, where is your life leading? Where do you want it to go? Unfortunately this is the time to wake up and take action, or, roll the dice and you may find yourself back in this hole.

Trick Shhh

My homeboys and I planned to go to Sausalito on a Saturday so that they could pop acid and I'd pop pills and we'd spend the day trippin' and thizzen and smoking six spliffs we already had rolled up.

On Saturday morning, my two homies decided to go to Berkeley instead of Sausalito, but I couldn't make that bus in time. They wouldn't wait on me to catch the next bus so I could come, too. I decided not to trip off of trick shhh, so I went and smoked a chopper with my other homies in the headlands. The next day I found out that those (jerks) missed the bus and went to Sausalito anyway.

-Deisel

From The Beat: What's this seeming compulsion to have drugs be the major part of any adventure your groups of homies and you have? Can you have fun without being high? Do you ever go anywhere alone? Can you have a great time with no drugs by yourself? Why don't you try it sometime? We hope you try, given where you sit today.

Two Different Paths

For me, living the double life is like going into two different paths.

The good one is with family, being good, going to school, and getting money, working.

The other one is gangbanging, and doing bad things and hustling for money.

-Luis

From The Beat: Are you living this double life you describe? If so, how do you accommodate helping your family, going to school, with gangbanging and hustling for cash? How does your being in juvy affect your family? Does your double life confuse and hurt your family, and you too?

I Don't Know

I don't know what this world is coming to

I don't know what this life is about

I don't know what's worth fighting for

I don't know why I don't

I don't know why I should care

I don't know when is the end

I don't know I'm even here

I don't really know anything

I don't know why I ever pretend

I don't know you and really don't care

I don't know this so-called God

I don't know this earth

I don't know this so-called space

I just don't know very much

-Cali

From The Beat: At least you know what you don't know—that's a start. It can be lonely and scary to realize that nobody has these answers for you, but it can also be wild and exhilarating, because you get to travel the world discover any answers for yourself.

Super Hyphy Last One

Super hyphy, last party, gonna do it big

Party with the girls, pop thizz, sip on Hen

I got on stage with Mistah Fab

Couldn't believe I did it that fat

Went outside to get some air

Sat down, saw a blunt bigger than a straw man

I can't believe what I saw

-Lil' Hus

From The Beat: It sounds like you're always super hyphy, even in juvy. Can you be unhyphy when you want to? Do you ever become serious or sad about anything? Then what happens? This is a time for you to mature up, otherwise you have a hard road ahead.

My Last Chance

Damn, I'm doing cool in here. Can't wait to go home. I plan to do better. I know I always be saying I'm going do better and I never do.

I'm supposed to get out of here next week on the bracelet and it's my last chance, so hopefully, I leave.

-Chubs

From The Beat: Now that you have another chance, do you think you could use some help to stay cool on the outs? Do you have someone your family that's an adult, a neighbor, doctor, juvy counselor who you trust, that you can go to? Please get any help you need now.

Double

My life is like looking at a mirror

A different person on the mirror

At school I stay clean and sober

And just stay out of trouble

But in the streets, I creep

And I drink

I pop and feel like I'm about to get a heat stroke

After it wears down, I smoke

'Til the sun goes down

And I pass out

'Til the next day, I'm out

-Chepe

From The Beat: You have interesting insights into your two sides. Who is the person you see in the mirror? How does the clean young man feel about the shadow guy who creeps at night? What does your dark side feel about the guy who is clean and sober every day? It's time for the sober guy to take action and better his life! Step up and don't be foolish with your freedom or program!

Already Back

I'm disappointed because last week I got out. I just did three weeks, but it was nothing. But now, a week later, I'm back in here with a gang charge. Is all good. I'll do my six weeks like nothing. Much love.

-Yosepi

From The Beat: Being in juvy is not all good. It may be something you can endure because you have to, but what's really going on?

Almost Out

Well, it's my first time here in the halls and the whole time I've been here has been hella boring. It gave me time, though, to think about my actions.

Now I know not to mess up on the outs, 'cause I'm gonna end right back up in here. I got one more week and I hope it goes by quick, 'cause I got hella stuff to do when I get out.

-Fernando

From The Beat: What are you thinking about your actions on the outs? What's your plan upon getting out?

Our Lives Revolve Around Our Cell Phones

Cell phones haven't created any problems for me yet. I imagine that it would cause hella problems to not have phones.

Almost everyone has a cell phone and hella people's lives revolve around their phone. Some people have everything on their phone. People got E-mail.

-Cellie

From The Beat: How has your cell phone made your life easier? What all do you keep on your phone? Now that you can't have your phone in juvy, what is all that silence, with no gadget to play with, like for you?

Living Full Time

Naw, I don't live a double life. I live full time, feel me. Yeah, I'm a gang member, ain't no denying it. Who don't know that I bang? Mom does, pops, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunties, uncles, POs, the next-door neighbor, every body, man.

But back to the subject. I breathe, sleep, eat and use the bathroom with my 'hood. To me, my name and image is permanently engraved, just like my tattoo. I love my 'hood.

That's all I can say 'cause I'm not used to writin' on y'all topics, homie. I'm usually in m own world, con diablos, demons y loksteros (with devils, demons and crazies.) All right then. Late much love and all respect to all the chosen few.

-Gangsta Shadow

From The Beat: And we add all our respects to all, chosen or not! The only thing we can say to you is that you don't know what tomorrow holds (nobody knows the future). So, at least hold out the possibility that the way you see yourself and the world today MAY not be the way you see it in the future.

In The Shadow Of Big Brother

Life is weak because you can trust no one. The people that you love is the one that stab you in the back the most. Sometimes I think about the people that I be with. Do they really care about me? I'm D-Nice lil' brother. The people that love my big brother say they love me. Do they?

My life is weak. All the ninjas I be with, to me they fake. My ninja Ant is the only ninja that I got love for because he told me, "I don't give damn D-Nice is your big brother. I will beat yo' ass." Ever since then, I have love for Ant.

Every body in the 'hood will be like, "That's D-Nice lil' brother. Don't touch him." But Ant didn't care. That's why I cant wait to come home. Ant is the only ninja I got love for.

-D-Nice

From The Beat: We're a little confused. You say that you are D-Nice's little brother, but then you sign your name as D-Nice. Are you your own little brother? That's not just a joke question, it's our way of telling you that you have to love yourself and stop worrying whether people love you or not. It sounds like you have grown up in the shadow of an older brother with a rep, and that you want to be seen and judged on your own merits or demerits. That's fair enough. So, stop worrying about him and start getting your act together. Then people will see that you are an individual, whether you're somebody's brother or not.

Living One Life, Not Double

Me, I live one life, a criminal a gang banger and a nice guy. But I consider that one person living a hard life. Pops was gone, then came back, then left again, then came back. So it really confusing. But my life is cool though.

I gangbang and I do what I do. I bang hard but it doesn't mean I can't be a successful person. Right now I'ma be locked up for a minute until I take my case to trial and I beat it. But I don't know if I'm going to beat it, but there a possibility. I'm not tripping that much, but I hope I beat it.

My life is different from a lot of people life, but I live one life of my own.

-Grimy

From The Beat: What does your lawyer tell you about going to trial? Sometimes, the voice of experience is worth listening to. If there is a possibility of losing at trial and facing worse consequences, then you have to think careful about what's best for your future. We wish you would write a piece that focuses just on that last sentence. How is your life different from a lot of people's lives? What do you want out of life? How do you hope to achieve it?

All Topics In One

I don't remember life before cell phones so I cant answer that. I've never lived a double life so I don't know. I clean my room and that's it. But if I see my aunt cleaning, I'ma tell her to stop and I'll clean it up. I don't deal with disappointment I just accept it and move on.

-Seme-edo

From The Beat: Here's the thing about The Beat. We don't want you to write one sentence about each topic. We want you to choose the topic that appeals to you most, and write a lot about it. There's no right way to do it, but you must tell us a lot more than one or two sentences. In other words, you have to do some thinking before you do some writing. You don't have to answer all the questions in whatever topic you choose, you just have to explain what you are thinking, and give plenty of details and examples. That's what makes a Beat piece. Next time...

Sexy Eyes

I wanna know what's your fantasies and your fears
I wanna know what makes you sad and shed tears
I wanna hold you deep into the night
I wanna make your dark days turn into light
But all this I can't tell you 'cause I'm only able to see yo' face
It's tearin' me up inside and arising so much hate
Your long hair and your baby face I long to touch
No need to talk, baby girl, just hush
You're oh so fine and I like the way you walk
You got a sexy-ass voice when you talk
Auburn highlights in your hair, to me that's a plus
Shows how feisty you are out of all the bunch
Light brown skin, what more can I say
A cholita too... damn, now I'm going crazy
I see you in yo' purple and khaki and I know you know me
I want to be your lover not just your homie
I remember the last time I saw you, we were lightweight
deep and drunk
Posted at the bus stop then we seen a rival, you
probably remember now, huh
I had on the Girbauds, black hoody, Jordans and a SF hat
Had a warrant, got sent to my group house and that was
the end of that
But I still remember you with your pretty eyes.
I'm catchin' feelings and I barely know you, that's no lie
I wanna be your man if you let me to
And I hope you feel the same way I do
Miss Payasa will you be my boo
And I promise to always be truthful to you
Always until my casket drops

-Gangsta Shadow

From The Beat: You've created the ideal love with words so fine/A skilled poet, line after line/But how much is real and how much is dream/When you're locked up, things aren't always what they seem/And if the choices you make lead to lock-up with your crew/You can be truthful to her, but can you be true/With both behind bars, all you have is mind love/We urge you to find a way to stay free and, then, truly find love!

My Double Life

Livin' the duce duce life, you know
Let me tell you, one bangin'
The other one being at home
Being a mother, a single one
When I'm out bangin'
Reppin' the color
The one I put it down for

-Monstrita

From The Beat: We're kind of disappointed in this from you, Monstrita. Not only did we have to cut about half of your piece, since we won't let you rep your colors in The Beat, we're more disappointed that it appears you've forgotten that you only have one thing to rep from now on, and that's your child. You can't both be the mother you say you want to be and the homie you take such pride in here. You can't avoid making a choice. If you choose one, you lose the other. So, which one will it be?

Here Again, Another Detour

What's up, Beat? Yeah, I'm back once again, but don't think for once I'm here to stay, because this is just a detour for me. I don't plan on staying for very long. And, yeah, I'm strugglin' to stay sane, looking at them four walls in my room. But like always, I'ma suck it up and finish my time and take it as another experience. And, as they say, "If it don't kill you, it a make you stronger."

-Resha Boo

From The Beat: You know what, Resha, we believe that some things that don't kill you don't make you stronger, but weaker. Every time you get locked up (and when we read a piece that starts, "I'm back once again..." we know you haven't lived up to your promises to yourself), we think it weakens you. That means you have to act now, while you're still strong, to stop doing what you know will lead you here (because it has before), and start doing things that are hard now, but will pay off in the future. We know you won't be here long, but only you know whether you'll be here often...

What's With The Release?

The name is Caprice

I'm tryna get released

Got me in my cell, begging God, "Please!"

Been in since January 26th

Now ain't that about a stitch

My best friend turned out to be a snitch

Thinking about really putting damage on that witch

At least I can turn an' face to my true ninja, Jarome

Judge out her mind, sending me to a group home

Making me think I don't have a place to call home

But on my dead homie, Kareem, I'ma stand strong

And to my sis, Mercedes, I won't be gone for long

Hope I would change before I do wrong

All day and night, stressing in this dome

Once in a while, you get to touch a phone

But at least I get to see my dad

Thinking about being locked up, turns me mad

Momma's sad

But it's too late for all that

But when I get out, I'ma be back where I was at

And that's a fact

Mobbing to this day, it don't stop

-Caprice

From The Beat: Your best friend should have been yourself. If you gave someone information that they could use to get themselves out of a situation, then you put yourself here, nobody else. Time to take responsibility for your own actions, and not point the finger. The judge is not out of her mind, but if you think you can avoid the consequences of your actions, then maybe you're not in your right mind! The entire criminal justice system, from juvenile hall to death row, is based on a foundation of snitching, and that will never change. The only thing you can do is change your act so that you are back in control of your life. But instead, you advertise here that when you get out you're going right back to what got you here. Do the same, expect the same...

Living The Double Life

Yes, I do live the double life because it works. I am used to doing good at home and school, but then, again, I like to hang out and have fun. This double life affects me at home and school because somehow it always gets in the way of my plans. Yes, sometimes it does have me confused because I try to live both, but something always goes wrong. I always listen to my family first, because they won't lead me into danger. Yeah, if I just stay true to myself. No, because I feel it's a little easy to live both.

-Yng

From The Beat: First, we have to tell you that to write a Beat piece is not just to answer the questions we ask. In fact, you don't have to answer any of our questions to write a great piece. Just take the topic and see where it leads you in your own words. And second, how can you see living the double life "works" when you're writing those words from behind walls? Would you be locked up if it worked? If this is working for you, we'd hate to see what happens when things don't work.

Waiting

What's good with The Beat? This yo' boy V-Guttah waiting for the day to get on. But 'til then, I'm in here chillin' trying to kill time and all the shhh. But when I get out, all y'all ninjas betta get ready for me, y'all heard. Man, I can't wait 'til I leave this hole, so I can put shhh back in place, y'all dig. Ninjas wonder why I stress that I am the best. That's all I can write for now. 'Til then, I'm out.

-V-G

From The Beat: We're waiting, too — for you to write something that has some greater meaning than this, to teach us something about who you are and what you want, to give us a sense that you have learned some things and don't want to repeat this experience. Yeah... we're waiting.

All Kinds Of Actions

What's good with The Beat? Huhhh, it's all kinds of "actions" in vocabulary, so I made a lil' rap like:

They say money is the motivation

But it my occupation

You thinkin' violation

You on some medication

It ain't no hesitation

It come with regulation

Thinkin' 'bout cancellation

Then it's extermination

You try some segregation

We losin' population

You copy that quotation

But ain't no imitation

You try impersonation

Then it's assassination

They trying operations

But ain't no revelations

So then it dedication

Time for yo' elevation

I call it renovation

Just like elimination

That end my presentation

No time for punctuation!

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: This inspires us to do a little rap of our own. Wanna hear it? Here it go: 'You've got skills, as well you know/You can put words together and make a flow/But skills alone don't guarantee/That you will grow up and be free/That requires goals to set and goals to follow/So that skillful words won't ring hollow/Of course, fame has come to some imprisoned/But all such men wish they had listened/Instead, they chose to ignore the calls/And so they write from behind four thick walls!

Going To County Jail

'Sup Beat? What's good? Being in here is way better than being in Log Cabin Ranch. Why? Because I'm not catching any dead time. And I get to see my fam every day, three calls a week, and all that stuff.

Anyways, I'm going to 850 right after my birthday. I'm going to do seven months, go home without probation, forget about group homes. And when I go back home, I'm 'bout to smack some stuff, kick it with my ninjas, be with my fams, do it big, see what's good wit h the grapes an' Hen'. So I'm glad that I'm going into 850, do my time and go home.

-Eb

From The Beat: You may be glad that you're going to the county to do your time so that you're off paper when you get out, but we don't see much planning for when that happens, and without planning, you're allowing someone else to plan for you. Kicking it with the homies, having sex with your girl, getting high — none of those things requires any thought at all, and without thought, you won't be able to hold onto the thing you want most right now — freedom! Think of what you want after you satisfy your need for self-gratification, and then think hard about how to go about achieving those longer-term goals.

Cleanin' Up

What's good with The Beat? Lil' Skippa holdin' it down. But check it. I been in this thing for a minute, so I'm pretty much on crew 80% of the time. I done seen some dirty shhhh!

One of the most dirtiest thing I done seen was somebody decided to take a dump and throw it behind the refrigerator. I wanted to slap the hell outta bruh.

But yeah, my cleanin' skills always seem to transfer with me to the outs, so my room stay clean.

-Lil' Skippa

From The Beat: That's a pretty disgusting story! But when we walk to work on these filthy streets, we're not that surprised. Human beings can be the dirtiest animals on earth, when they want to be. But good for you for keeping it clean in here and out there.

RIPs

I would like to honorably dedicate this to my dead homies, startin' off with Antwaniesha aka Nish. I first met her in middle school at Martin Luther King. Next, Marcus who I also went to the same school with. As well as Berrell and Lil' Wagga, the block homie Big Ben. And last but not least, Ming Lee aka The Legend.

I'm finna share a few stories about these people and why I chose them. Antwaniesha because she was really on her a game, goin' to college on the lil' college TV news. And out of respect for her and her brother Chop and cousin Boe, she wasn't even beefin' with nobody, just a innocent female at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Marcus an Rell 'cause them was the homies, and e'ry time I look at my yearbook, I see all three of them at least twice.

Wagg 'cause I met him when I was like 12, and every time he used to look at me funny. Then one day I asked why he always looked at me like that, and he said 'cause he thought I was messin' with his girl. But afta that, we was coo'.

And Ming Lee, I met him through his lil' brother 'cause we went to elementary school with each otha. Then he was messin' with my fam, and I didn't even know 'til one day he came to the house, and I was like, "Don't I know you?" And he said yeah. My fam and his fam been close and we didn't even know. But I miss him the most 'cause he was like a brother to me.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: We admire your desire to pay tribute to these fallen friends. Do you think the reasons they have passed out of this world are worth the loss? Do you ever think about how everyone is connected to someone who loves them and mourns them as much as you loved and mourn your own losses? Are you doing anything to change the odds that one day, someone who loves you might be writing a similarly sad and tragic remembrance of what you meant to them?

Live By The Gun!

Days and days I gotta watch my back, 24 hours, 7 days a week! I have enemies that I have to worry about! I got goons and family that got my back and that's going to ride to the death! Some that I grew up with and would have my back 'til the end, but when it come down to something hard, they break down! Me, I got all my homies back until they turn on me. That's when I break my word! We all we got!

-Wink

From The Beat: We're tempted to say "grow up," because this sounds like the games that children play without thought of consequences — "cowboys and Indians," "good guys and bad guys." But the tragedy is, so many boys your age will never grow up, never grow any older than the moment that bullet ended everything for all time. Forget your "enemies" for a moment, and think about the weeping mothers left behind. What do they mean to you?

My Motivation Is My Future

Wha's up wit' it, Beat? This yo' girl, Angel, still in here. I can't wait to get out. They sending me to Colorado. I been here since January 2. I'm trying to hold my head up, but I be getting frustrated sometimes. I'm being patient. That's the only thing I can do. When I get out, I'ma try to stay out. My motivation is my future.

-Angel

From The Beat: Learning to be patient is a great skill that you'll need all through your life. We know you want a better future than your past, so just keep your eyes on the prize. Good luck!

I Need Some Soul Ointment

I'm disappointed I'm doin' bad. God, I need some soul ointment.

The judge turn me down every time I attend an appointment

Listen to me, y'all do what's important
'Cause you will wanna do what's important

I realized that this is getting' old

I'm tired of bein' in here 'cause somebody told

Yeah, listen to me y'all, do what yo' told

Just listen... Put yo' ear to the streets

This here is another quick one for The Beat

-B-Luva

From The Beat: This may be quick, but it's not shallow. We love the line about needing soul ointment, and we wish we could provide it to you. But really, you are the one who has to find that balm and apply it to your soul. Each time you let yourself be put in a box for strangers to tell you what to do, you'll find yourself more in need of that comforting ointment. You will be leaving this place (if not as soon as you'd like), and that's when you have to do your most serious thinking about what you want in your life, and what plan you have for getting it. Unless you do that step, you'll never find the balm you're looking for.

Disappointment

The biggest disappointment is when I put the street life in front of my family. I was selling dope, weed, powder, and pills. I put money in front of my family, basically saying forget them. Even when I ran away from my group home, my family had a house for me, and I chose the streets.

This Lil' Bra. I'm out. Holla.

-London

From The Beat: Have you thought about why you put these other things ahead of the family that loves you? If you don't think about the why, then what will change when you get out of here?

Fake People

What's up? This Beat Within about fake people 'cause it's certain people in this thing as we speak that don't got no integrity, feel me.

Like on some otha shhhh, the dude that got my mind on this topic when he was in this unit he didn't have shhhh to say. Didn't even come out his room or eat except if staff made him. Know he around people from places he cool with, and think he the hardest ninja walkin', but for real, if you ain't gone be yo'self 100%, what make you real?

I do me all day without a problem 'cause whateva happen gone happen. But me, my life is too real for me to be fake. And if you think I'm fake, let me know why you think that. But everybody keep it real with yo'self.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: Although we agree with your advice to be yourself, we're not altogether sure what that means. Is it possible that the dude you describe who wanted to stay in his room was being true to himself by staying away from perceived enemies (and avoiding trouble), or even friends, when he wanted to work on his own issues in his own way? Judging others is always a risky thing to do, so we don't know if he was keeping it "real" or not.

Living The Double Life

To me, ain't no such thing as living the double life. You either in it or you ain't because you might get caught slipping trying live that good life, then come to the 'hood like everything sweet. So you either go live that good life or that 'hood life.

I'm out.

-Bm

From The Beat: This is a pretty disappointing piece, a lazy answer to a more complicated question. Were you living the 'hood life or the good life before you came in here? We're guess the 'hood life, but that didn't keep you from slipping, did it? We want you to write more. We want you to think more. We want you to show that you're moving from boy to man. Where's the evidence?

Much Love

What's good with The Beat? This Ulala up in the weak max unit waitin' to get the hell up outta here! But yeah, I'm tired of this bs, watching my folks come visit me even though I already told 'em it's a'ight, they don't have to come. But still they insisted, and they always say, "It's easy for you to say." And it's true. Now I realize how hurt they are.

So that's it for The Beat. And for my brahs, love y'all. Keep ya head.

-Ulala

From The Beat: It seems like you are maturing enough to see that the love you express for your family, that continues to sacrifice for you by coming here to visit, has to be back up with action. If you stop hurting them (by coming here), then you'll also stop hurting yourself. It's time.

Death Before Dishonor

Death and destruction

I'm going out bustin'

My guys stay cussin'

The 'hood what I shout out, then I go all out
Facing these demons every day I'm gone ball out

Why did I choose this life...

'Cause I needed a wife

So I proposed to the game, now I'm wit' it for life

Never snitch on a boy 'cause that just ain't right

You run and tell that man because you can

So I stay far away unless I'm playing my way

Mook with this poem, I'm gone for the day

-Mook

From The Beat: If losing your freedom (for longer and longer time) is not enough to make you think hard about what you're doing, then you should visit a physical rehab. Center some time and take a look at those young men who thought, like you, that it was as simple as "live by the gun, die by the gun." Instead, they are confined to wheelchairs; they need an aide to wipe their ass; they can't eat without assistance; sometimes part of their brains are gone, and they can't talk. Since nobody knows what life holds in the future (even if you think you know), we hold out hope that you grow to see there is another way to live — before it all ends, one way or another.

Disappointment

'Sup with The Beat, mane. Well, this that street ninja aka Goof Troop livin' this max out life on the max unit. Well, the way this ninja deals with his disappointment... honestly, I take it out on others. Not on my fam bam but on my enemies, maybe even on my girl. I try to handle my anger when the shhh hit the fan, but it don't always work that way. Sometimes people's feelings get hurt or physical. I know its not good but I try.

-Goof Troop

From The Beat: We wonder, when you read this back, if even you sound fair to yourself. You say you know it's not good, but is that good enough? Have you ever tried to look carefully at this habit of yours, and to see if there might be a more constructive (or, at least, less destructive) way to handle your problems?

Not Thinkin'

When I was out on the run, I was on my toes, getting' my dough. You know, bobbin' and weavin', not thinkin'. I wasn't finna go down because I wasn't robbin' or bustin' no gun. But I messed around and go town fa someone else driven retarded. Now I'm here for 18 months.

-Andreus

From The Beat: There are a couple of things that we can't understand. When you say "on the run," does that mean you had run from a program? If so, then you really weren't thinking, because sooner or later you would have to face the consequences that you're now facing. We're glad to read that you weren't robbing or shooting, but still, you put yourself at risk, and now you have a long time to think.

Double Life

I was working and going to school and picking up my lil' sis when she got out. And after that I was outside doing my thang. I was at home cleaning my room and mopping the floor.

-Dre

From The Beat: You can give us more than this, and unless you do give us more, we won't bother to put it in The Beat. Start sharing your thinking, and not just a couple of sentences that skim the surface. For example, do you feel like you've let your sister down because you're not there to pick her up? Do you see any connection between doing your "thang" outside, and being here, inside? Does it matter to you that you've left people behind who depended on you because other things were more important? Is there any connect between the laziness that is reflected in these two-sentence pieces and where you are in life?

Disappointment

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na writin' 'bout what disappoint me. What disappoint me is when I see one of them ninjas on the outs, and they be like, "What's up wit' it, bra?" They be cool an' want to mess wit' a ninja, but when you see ninjas in the halls, they talk shhh through the windows, saying you a sucka-ass ninja. That's what disappoint me a lot.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: Well, we had to take out that "little somethin'" you added to this piece, 'cause it read too much like a threat. Is there anything about your own behavior that disappoints you?

Holdin' It Down

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Lee. Man, my PO tryna send me hella far, but it's good. I'ma knock it out, do my time, get back to the streets when I'm 18.

But my real name Sheldon, and I'm holdin' it down for my cousin.

-Sheldon

From The Beat: We had to take out your last sentence because there's no communication to others in the hall through The Beat. When you say you're going to "knock out" your time, that doesn't tell us anything about how you plan to use your time, and what you hope to do when you get back to the street. You can give us much more than this. Show us that you are thinking, and then share some of those thoughts. That's what a Beat piece should be.

Planning To Change

I was happy for my ninja whan he got out. Shhh, now I'm trying to get the hell out. When I do get out — hopefully soon — I ain't coming back to this hole, and I'ma try to keep my ninjas from coming here.

Oh yeah, I hope I beat my 707 case. I plan to change my ways when I'm on the outs. That's all I could say.

-Young Lano

From The Beat: Write us a piece that lays out all the ways you plan to change when you get out of here. How will you keep yourself from coming back. How will you keep your homies from coming here? Now, that would make an interesting piece.

Hopeless/Useless

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy, Tha Dude, located at the Ranch. I'm 'bout to spit how I feel this incarceration shhh—it's useless. The system thinks incarcerating people makes them want to change, but it doesn't do nothing but make the situation worse. The only way a man or woman will change, is if they really wanna change. But to keep it real,

I can only speak for myself. I know that being locked up don't change me or my mentality. It's more hopeless than that—it's useless, because, well, I know that the high person(s) lock people up for the money (because everything in this world gotta do with tha currency, but that's a whole different page and a different topic.)

So it's useless for them to lock me up, because I'm go' keep doing me. This ain't my first time being locked, and it ain't go' be my last. As I'm writin' this letter, I've been down sixteen months, and the only thing being locked up do to me is make me wanna step my game harder (I think about things I might of did wrong in the situation that got me locked and I get them down to perfection, but nothing's perfect.) But I'm 'bout to leave it at this, Beat.

-Tha Dude

From The Beat: You could consider what you did wrong on the outs that messed you up, got you arrested, sent to the halls and eventually to the Ranch, and work it out in your mind perfectly, so when you get out you'll keep on doing whatever brought you into juvy, but next time you won't, ideally, get caught. Or you might get busted your first time back out, for some reason your imagination didn't foresee and deal with, and get sent straight back to juvy, to state prison, or worse.

*It was really my fault that
I missed his birthday...*

Escape From The Halls

Man the hall is weak as hell! Max unit is weak as hell! And for y'all who think I'm just complaining, forget y'all.

Damn, all these new halls and people escaping. They say the high security, but there really not. So far, I got on from the halls for a good five weeks, and some other cat got on from Hillcrest, the San Mateo hall. My opinion on this is that it's only the beginning.

-Big Angel

From The Beat: We don't know if you're right or wrong about your prediction, but we think it's not the right focus for you. These places are designed to incarcerate young people like you, and so your focus should be on what you can do so that you aren't one of those young people. The only sure way to escape the halls is not to come to them in the first (or second, or third) place...

My Bra Birthday

What's up wit' it, Beat? Man, I'm mad as hell 'cause my big bra birthday was last week and I missed it 'cause I was locked up. I could've seen him on his birthday at my family visit. But my PO cancelled it 'cause I was doing bad in the unit.

It was really my fault that I missed his birthday 'cause I knew he was coming from his home pass from ROP, but I kept doing bad. That led to something not good and my PO cancelled my family visit. So I'm sorry big bra, I missed yo' 18th birthday.

-Lil' Canon

From The Beat: We're sorry you messed up and missed your brother's birthday. At least you are taking responsibility for this consequence. But it proves (again) that when you make bad decisions, the consequences affect not just you, but also the ones that you love.

Real And Fake

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy, Yung Chink, holdin' it down as the usual. Well, today's topic I am going to spit and acknowledge y'all on are "real" and "fake" ninjas.

A "real" ninja can only be a few things. Here is a couple.

1. Be real to your loyal thugs and family and never cross them.
2. Don't act selfish to your love ones, let everybody eat and get they shine on.
3. Share the wealth.
4. Respect everybody in your circle the same.
5. Lead, never follow.
6. Never snitch.

Now a "fake" ninja can be a lot of things. So many things I need more than one sheet of paper, but here is a couple for you.

1. Selfish.
2. Follower.
3. Sucka.
4. Hater.
5. And a snitch.

Which category do you fall in? Me, well, you know I am a "real" ninja and forever gon' be a "real" ninja. One thang I didn't mention about a real ninja is I am independent, forever and always. Fo' my fam and "real" thugs, stay true and keep ya heads up. Ain't too many of us nowadays.

-Chinky

From The Beat: OK, now why don't you write more about yourself next week? In what ways are you independent? How are you generous with your loved ones? Who do you lead? Where do you lead them in ways that will help them? How do you help anyone to get his/her shine on?

Cell Phones

My cell phone story is I hate when my phone go dead. I would be in a good conversation and my phone die on me. I always lose my cell and have to get a new one. I be mad when I lose all my numbers. I have a lot of pictures in my phone and ring tones, so now I don't download a lot of songs and don't take a lot of pictures.

-Ebony

From The Beat: How would your day change if you just didn't have a cell phone at all? Would things getter more difficult, or less?

Better Beat Covers

What's up, Beat Man? I'm writing to you today to talk about these weak ass drawings in The Beat that y'all have been publishing! Man, y'all publishing anything nowadays. I'm tired of seeing these weak ass Chinese characters and gay ass Spidermen up in The Beat. What happened to the old Beat that used to publish them sick ass prison drawings with deep meanings and shhh we can relate to? The drawings nowadays seem like something my lil' brother would draw. Y'all publishing stick figure drawings now! Come on, man, step yo' game up, Beat! Y'all need to get back in contact with Michael Orozco and tell him to draw y'all some more pictures, but until then, I ain't messin' with y'all! This yo' boy, Smoke, up at the Ranch.

-Smoke

From The Beat: Well, you're home now, so we'll send you the latest Beats that feature Orozco drawings again, as well as your writings. But why are you dissing other drawings? You know we have all kinds of illustrators who draw for The Beat, who create many different creatures and characters. It's too bad you never drew anything for The Beat while you were at the Ranch, so we could have seen what you'd produce!

This Double Life

This life that I live confuses me.
I live this life

Like one day I'm a gang-banger living the bad life.
Then the next day
I'm living the good life playing my sports and wanting to do good.

But then in my head,
It's telling me to live the bad life and that no one cares.

Do what the homies do, go out, use drugs, go party,
Do all the things you wanna' do.

But then on the other hand,

My mother crying, saying,

"Why, why do you choose this life?"

It's just gonna be ruining your time."

I don't know what to do anymore, who do I choose to satisfy?

My hommies or my mama?

It's pretty hard to choose,

please oh please, help me somebody.

I struggle everyday wondering what to do about this double life.

Should I choose?

If I would, I think I would have to go with my life.

Would want to be famous, or get an education, or play professional basketball.

Living the good life.

That's my double life story of what's been

And never wanna go through again.

-Antonette

From The Beat: You need to ask yourself who's more important to you, your mother or your "homies." Who wants to see you succeed and who wants to just have a good time? You ask if you should choose, we think that you have a right to choose what's going to make you happy. Be brave and do what's right!



A Rap About Change

Since I was little my mom taught me to be good

But all my life I was raised in the hood

People raised wealthy ain't ever under stood

Change my life I use to wish I could

It's hard to stay focused with evil in your face

Every day of the week gang banging was the case

Who would have thought the d-homes where I'd end up?

But now I have a second chance, it that enough?

It is if I make it

I got a chance to change my life, and I'm not goin' to stake it

I do believe in change and I'm not gonna fake it

If my hood says I've changed, I have for the better

Now I know there's more ways then one to get the cheddar.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Ryan its one thing to say it and another to do it. As the saying goes "talk is cheap" Follow your words and do just as you say. You have a second chance, make that change to better your life.

My B-I-G Disappointment

My disappointment in my life is getting into the system.

I started out by fighting in school, and getting searched and they ended up finding drugs.

I started with one year of probation, and they started giving me drug tests. At first I was passing them all, and then I started to not give a crap. It went to one dirty drug test then two and more.

My probation was trying to help me but I wasn't listening. Finally, she had enough and had an arrest warrant for my arrest. I kind of was on the run, but I was in my house so they could have picked me up any time they wanted. Finally one day getting out of work around noon, we got stopped by a cop and I said, "damn it, I'm going to face the consequences now. "I told him my name instead of a fake name, and now I'm here in this stupid joint.

-Jander

From The Beat: It sounds like you were starting to do well, but then as you say you gave up. Face your consequences now, and get out of jail and start doing right. Finish school, get a good job so you can do the things you want, and not have to worry about being locked up.

Disappointed My Judge

I disappointed Judge Zamora, I ran from treatment foster care, and I disappointed her because I said I was not going to run. For some reason I just could not stand being away from my family.

I've been in and out of JDC for 2 years, and these last years that went by I have not achieved anything. The reason for that is because everybody was always trying to help me but I did not want to help my self. The only way is to get treatment; I think treatment will help me with my drug addiction and this I think I need before it's too late.

-Peter

From The Beat: One thing to remember, being away from your family while in treatment is only a short term process. With in a few months you'll be back with your family, but you have to want to make the change. If not, you'll only end up back in the same place you are now. Running gets you no where, because with time you'll have to face the problems anyway.

The Painful Double Life

When I start living the gang-life, I don't think I'm going to stop the gang stuff.

But when I do a crime, it makes me sad.

I start thinking, "Why did I do that?"

But I get over it like in a day.

When I play football, it makes me happy.

And my auntie will say that at least I'm doing something good.

When I detail cars, it makes me happy.

-Charles

From The Beat: You say you don't think you'll stop the gang stuff, we think that's your biggest mistake. You stated that you get over doing a crime in a day. You don't have a conscience and that will send you to prison one day. Do what makes you happy and keeps you out of trouble, like playing football and detailing cars.

Living The Double Life

To me living a double life is playing football and being in a gang, but I am not confused because I know what I am going to do when I grow up. I am going to be a mechanic and I'm going to be a good husband and a good father.

-Mathew

From The Beat: It's good that you know what you want to be when you grow up, but statistics show that the longer your in a gang the more chances you have of getting killed or put in prison. How will you be able to live the life you want when you get locked up or at worst killed now that you are living the double life of a gang member?

Goodbye Beat

What's up Beat? This is going to be the last time I write in the Beat. I'm leaving on Tuesday to the ranch.

I can't wait until I go to the ranch. I've been in here for about three months. So I'm excited to leave because I want to have an O-T so I can see my beautiful baby girl.

I'm going to miss writing in The Beat. I've been writing in the Beat since I got here and now this is going to be the last one I write. It's been fun talking to The Beat Within staff too. They're really nice people. Well Beat, I'm going to let you guys go. Goodbye! Take care!

-Elissa

From The Beat: And you take care. We're glad we could offer you a chance to get things off your chest. You can write from wherever you are, if you'd like to. Best!

Disappointing My Sister

What's up Beat? Today's topic is about disappointment. The time that I disappointed someone was when I didn't go to my little sisters fifth birthday party because I got locked up. My whole family and my lady expected me to be there. I disappointed everyone who was there, and I wish I never got locked up. If I never got locked up, my little sister would have her whole family there and it would have been the happiest day for her. So that's all for this topic. Until next time.

-J.R.

From The Beat: It's hard to be the source of disappointment to one as young as your little sister. How will you make it up to her? We hope the answer includes the plan never to allow yourself to be taken from your family again.

Disappointment

Last time I was disappointed was towards myself. Not only did I disappoint myself but also my parents.

Last time I was out I was suppose to get my shhh together but there I was out slippin' again.

Over and over I've told my parents I'm going to do good and when I get out that's what I plan to do. I'm going to stop causing them disappointment, and myself too. Don't get me wrong - I'll still do what I do, and have my ol' ways - but as for school and a job, I would work with that. Alrato Beat.

-Nessa

From The Beat: Sorry, but you can't have it both ways. Your childish street ways and the right way don't mix. If you want to stop disappointing your parents, and yourself, then do the right thing and kiss the sinister ways goodbye. Otherwise, we'll see you in the hall, until it's time for county, and then....

First Time Writer

What's up all Beat readers and Beat Within people? This is my first time writing to the Beat. I was locked up last time, but got to APA (Alternative Placement Academy) and now I'm back for a more serious crime. I didn't really write the last time I was in here. This time I might write more often. I also wrote some other ones maybe they will get there under "Cisco".

Well, I'ma take it down in a bit so till next time much love to my brother Javier and his lady and Mumbles and to the familia.

-Cicso

From The Beat: We already read (edited) and commented on your very long poem, so you already know how impressed we are with your writing skills. Now that we see this is your first time writing for us, we are even more impressed. But being impressed with your writing is not the same as being impressed with your thinking. So we hope you share some more of that with us, so we can understand where you are and how you got there.

When I Think Of You

When I think of you I think about my life,
Will it be the same if you weren't by my side?

It's a question I ask myself
every time I think of you, and I'm fine.

It's like having you by my side.

When I think of you I think of my best friend,
my everything,
something that completes the real me.

When I think of you is when I'm happy!

And that's why I love you!

-M's Girl

From The Beat: Hey MG, we prefer not to print love letters. As we've said many times, a love letter should be sent to the person you're writing about. We'll print this one, but next time, send the letter directly to the object of your affection.

My Disappointment

One of my disappointments that I've had in life was when I let my family down when I told them I wouldn't do what I did to get in the hall last time. But I did it again, and I found myself back in the hall.

This time my family was really disappointed in me. They wouldn't even talk to me for a month, and now I facing charges like assault on a peace officer and assault with a deadly weapon. My mom won't even acknowledge me in my visits. She won't even accept my apology. So I sometimes wonder why she visits me.

Well, that's what disappointed me.

-Niko

From The Beat: It sounds like you have been surprised by the personal consequences you're now having to face for your actions, and not just the system's consequences. We can imagine how much it hurts you to have your mother so disappointed in you that she can't accept your apology, but can you imagine how much it hurts her to see you in here? Trust is a hard thing to earn, especially when you've broken promises in the past. But it can be earned back over time if your words of apology are accompanied by actions. If you make a promise to yourself not to let your family down again — and if you keep that promise — you'll find that you also won't be letting yourself down again.

Disappointment

Well Beat let me tell you something. I disappointed my jefa (mom) and I disappointed myself. Because I was looking for a job and I got the job but on that Saturday I got arrested and now I'm here and in two weeks I'm leaving to L.A. to start my time in Y.A. That's how I disappointed everybody, even myself.

-Victor

From The Beat: Sometimes, Victor, the biggest mistakes or disappointments in our lives are the greatest lessons we learn. What have you learned from this disappointment? Do you think you will do anything differently once you leave Y.A.? We hope to continue hearing from you once you leave. Make sure to tell us how you've changed.

A Bad Scene

What's crackin' Beat? Well today hasn't really been a good day for me. First of all, I got an hour for some stupid origami shhh that we couldn't have for giving attitude and talking back.

On top of that, a counselor came in trying to act like he knows what I've been going thru when the reason I'm here is because of him. Then after that, staff restrained my best friend right in front of my face. They slammed her in the window and I couldn't help her out. So far she's cool, except that they broke her wrist.

-Delicious

From The Beat: It does sound like a very bad day. Things will get better. We hope your friend's wrist isn't broken. And we hope you're folding cranes again, soon.

Always Here To Stay

What up Beat?

Well, today I'm going to write about living the everyday daily life in the 'hood

Where the palm trees stay high and drink all day even till the sun leaves the sky

In the 'hood is were the females like to be kickin' it with the homies

Black and gold is all they see

Also I can't forget the fact I can combine the homies with the family

When I walk down the street what do I see,

Nothing but the enemy eying me

Seems like I can never get away

Please believe I'm still standing here through this very day

Sippin' on tequila and Tangaray

Just know that I'm always here to stay

-J.R.

From The Beat: Even though you're in the hall/You write that you're still standin' tall/So when you say that you're "always here to stay"/Do you mean living free or locked away?/If all you think of is getting drunk and getting high/How long will it be before you crash when you fly?/Without some changes, you risk a terrible find:/ That those females you kick it with will be only in your mind!

RIP Jose M.

This song is dedicated to Jose Merales, Rest in Peace with all my heart.

Aqui estoy thinking about you carnalito.

Every time you cross my mind tu sabes que me aguito.

I remember when we used to kick it and have a blast.

It's hard to believe that was back in the past.

I remember those times like it was yesterday.

If you're here and I was there it all be the same way.

I never thought we have to go through anything like this.

I just sit back and say Rest in Peace.

All the homies got your name tattooed

behind their backs, necks and some on their chest and arms just to show respect.

Simon carnal you're in our mente all the time.

Tu eres primo, you will never stay behind. "Rest in Peace!"

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: First of all, we are so sorry for your loss Rigoberto. It is always so difficult to lose someone you love. It is clear from this piece that you are still mourning your loss. Writing about it is a good way to grieve and deal with your loss. Are there other things you can do to help you deal? Jose is lucky to have people who loved and still love him so much.

Can't Wait

What it do with my peeps and The Beat? Me, I'm cool - just waiting for something new to happen.

I was supposed to have court today, but I guess not. I haven't had a visit, and no letter in a cool lil' minute.

I'm still stressing but not like last week. I miss my patnas on the real. I can't wait to reunite with them. I miss my grandma hella much.

I can't wait to get out. I'm going to do good when I get out. The first thing I'm doing when I get out is go to my city.

I'm tired of this food. I want to slap some Lil' Wayne up in here so bad. That's my favorite rapper off top. Well, like Lil Wayne says: I'm stuntin' like my daddy.

-Sephina

From The Beat: Make sure that new stuff you're waiting for is good stuff. You are a smart young woman. The only thing holding you back is yourself. You make sure those partners of yours are up to good things. Nothing less will do. We're expecting good things of you.

Real Talk

There's this dude in my unit that says there's like 4 or 5 people in his head. Anyways, he attacks me one day. Then someone else the next. So does that mean that "they" ganged up and fought five against one, or was it one on one? This is driving me nuts.

What does The Beat have to say about this question because I feel bad about whoopin his ass, but if there were five of him I'd feel better.

-Wolverine

From The Beat: Depends on what kind of nuts you're talking about. We prefer almonds or macadamias.

I'm Gone. Finally I'm Going to YA Alternative

G-onda Beat, it's your homie Smokey, saying these pocas linias to say that next week I'm leaving. I'm going to YA Alternative. I'm doing 18 months in Los Angeles and pues next week I won't be here, so when you read this I will be over there. So I'm leaving before Friday, so all, stay up. Oh and pues simon Beat I'm gonna do my time. God Bless.

-Rigoberto

From The Beat: We are glad you're moving on Rigoberto. We have had many pieces from you here at The Beat and we hope you continue writing. We hope to hear from you!

The Day I Got My Scar

This is that homeboy Chuko, telling you about the day I got my scar. I remember that day like it was yesterday.

My homeboy called me to pick him up at the mall, later on we were at the park, and five cars filled with rival gang members tried rushing us.

We were about twenty-plus deep and when they rushed us, we ended up six-deep. They had weapons in their hands like bottles and bats. We didn't have any weapons on us. They ganged up on us and each one of us had a few people on us. This guy threw a bat towards me and landed on the floor. I picked it up, he pulled out a golf club, and he swung at me and missed. Then he swung at me again and hit my right hand and left me a scar that was the day I got my scar.

-Chuko

From The Beat: That's how people lose their lives. It could have been worse. You gotta learn to appreciate your life. If you don't take care of it, no one will for you. Life is not a game and you are playing a game that can bring tears and sadness to your life and those who care for you. Before it gets too difficult, get rid of this gangster life. Save yourself. There are many things in life to explore and to enjoy than what you are playing. Think about it. Don't let another person write a story about how you lost his life.

Living The Double Life

Hey Beat! It's me, once again. Well, today's topic caught my eye, and I wanna drop a couple of lines on it.

Well, I know how it is 'cause I lived a double life for a minute. It kinda sucked because it kept leading me back here. It's hard because you got to make so many choices between your family and friends. I got sick of it, so I made a choice for me. That choice was to change my life and be a decent girl, like I'm suppose to be.

My life is somewhat better but I sometimes feel myself go back to my old ways, and that's how I got back here. I've got no excuses but all I got to do is keep myself motivated to not slip again. So, yeah, I chose the decent side because I don't want to die violently. I want to live a happy life. Thanks Beat!

-Family or friends

From The Beat: You are welcome. We want you to live a happy life. Make the right choices and you increase your chances, dramatically.

I'm So Tired

I'm so tired of coming back to the hall.

I'm so tired of the food.

I'm so tired of the drama.

I'm so tired of waking up every morning and going to sleep everyday at the same time.

I'm tired of seeing me fall into the same footsteps as all friends.

I'm so tired of seeing the pain in my step-mom's eyes.

I'm so tired of the life I live, though I just don't seem to change. Hopefully when I get out of the ranch I can start fresh.

And to all my loved ones... Stay up!

-Tatiana

From The Beat: Hey, we're tired of the same old stuff, too. We want to hear something exhilarating about you. If you want to change, you'll change. You're not a robot, are you? You're made of flesh and blood, aren't you? You have a brain, don't you? You can make decisions. No one forces you to stay as you are. So get with it. You don't have to become a saint overnight. But make a commitment to do something good, something better, no matter how small it may seem, everyday. Before long, you'll be able to look in the mirror and like what you see. Get started, now.

I'm Out

What's up Beat! I don't like the topics today, so I'll just do my own thing. I'm leaving to the Ranch next week. I've been here for 10 months and I'm finally leaving. I guess I got really lucky at first. I was looking at 10 years in prison, then when witness was dropped I was looking at a few years in CYA.

My PO and the D.A were pushing CYA, but my public defender was fighting for Ranch and I guess I got it. I gotta thank my public defender big time. He tried real hard to fight for me in court. They also went easy on me because I did well in here.

I had a light record in here, they never hear of me getting into trouble (on the unit), and I was on supply too. I didn't think all that shhh really made a difference in court, but I guess not. I always see people in here showing off that they got locked up numerous times.

I think it's stupid 'cause it means you got caught numerous times. You should just play smart only stupid people get locked up and the smart ones stay out.

Alright I'll end it here. Later.

-Xnotoriousviet

From The Beat: We supposed that your behavior in juvenile really helped. Life has given you another big chance to enjoy time of your life. Well deserved!! It would be a shame if you waste this opportunity after people fought so hard to reduce your time sentence. We hope you do your ranch program and get back on track. Make a good thing for yourself. We so appreciate all your thoughts this past year!

Disappointment In Me

I deal with disappointment by thinking about it.

When there is a situation that doesn't work my way, my feelings are angry, sad, and mad. I get angry a lot. I usually can't handle my anger in a good way. It usually ends out bad.

A time I was disappointed was now. I'm disappointed in myself because I'm in here, and I might be away for a while. I know that when you're angry you can't run from your problems. Now I really want to try my hardest to control my anger. If I start to feel angry, I'm gonna take a break. Hopefully, by then I'll feel better. If not, I'll do something I enjoy to get my mind off my anger, before it takes over and I do something I'll be disappointed about.

-Tommy

From The Beat: We have no advice for you. You've obviously been thinking a lot about this. You're on the right track now. Don't give up.

Hard Times

I remember those days

Kicking back in the 'hood

Childhood memories

When everything was going good

Nowadays things ain't the same

Think different and people change

As I get older I see

I caused my love ones only pain

Living this life, full of sin

Struggle to survive

Around these ol' friends

Hoping to make it past the age of 25

Learned how to fight,

Caught slipping almost lost my own life

With that forty five

Decide to change my life

To dry my mama's eyes

-Ace

From The Beat: Things changes throughout time and you should as well. One day, you'll wake up and realize that the life you've been living is fantasy, a fantasy that soon can be over if prevention is not applied. Be careful with what you play with. If you really want to change, change for yourself and those who love you. They don't deserve this from you.

Living The Double Life

I had a homie that has a double life. When he kicked it with the homies and when he wasn't with us. For example he was going to take us to Wilcox to do something but then he flaked on us for his lady. And when he would chill with us he would wear Cortez and Dickies but around his lady he dressed punk rock.

-Wright

From The Beat: It's sometimes hard to understand why people do the things they do. Why do you think your friend led this 'double life'? Why do you think he didn't feel he could be who he really was and instead had to be two different people when he was around his friends and when he was around his girlfriend? Sometimes people pretend they're someone they're not to fit in. Do you think this was the case with your friend?

Dreams (Part-1)

Hey Beat, what cracking? Well I'm gonna talk about dreams.

Well I had a crazy dream two day ago. It was hella scary 'cause I came back to my room, I fell asleep, and into a deep sleep.

It was hella crazy 'cause at first I was dreaming, I was dying and my homeboy Dopey was in m cell! I ask him if I was dead. And he said look at your body, I looked and said, "What! How did I die?" And he told me that I was in coma.

I was like, "look G, I freaking hate life." I looked up, you're dead and everyday I dream of you G!

And he told me, "You think I'm going crazy? Every time I see you fight, I get mad! What do you know how I feel? I'm dead. I have to put up with my mom crying everyday 'cause I'm 6 feet deep. Man if my baby could just see me and I could just hold him. Do you know what I would do?"

I told him back, "Do you know what I would do just to be dead?" Well I got to go, but I'll more next time and finish it.

-Steven

From The Beat: We would love to hear the ending part of your nightmare. Did you see a scary movie right before going to sleep? Or were you thinking about someone who's no longer in this life right before sleeping? Stay away from negative things that can make a nightmare a reality.

I Love You

I know you're disappointed what all that I've done
 You didn't leave, so I know you're the one
 I've messed us up a couple of times
 I know my stuffs always been on your mind
 First it was the cheating, then all the lying
 We both knew it was true but I always stay'd denying
 It happened again a couple of times
 But in the end I'm glad you're still mine
 I've changed all of my ways; you know it's true
 You know baby girl, that I love you

-Nathan

From The Beat: Your writing is very true, Nathan. You're lucky your significant other has stuck by you through all the difficult times both of you have been through. I hope she reads this poem so that she can know how much you care about her. If she can't or doesn't, please make sure to tell her! We're also glad you've matured and developed as a person to where you saw the error of your ways and was a big enough person to admit it.

Achievements

I've achieved many things in my life, things like staying sober for a long time and I also achieved to live the age of 17 without getting shot, but I got shot before. Well I also achieved to make it out of middle school, but my thing is to achieve is to make my family members happy. I have to prove other people wrong that think that I ain't gonna make it.

-Pee-Wee

From the Beat: There are many more things that you need to think about other than thinking if you got shot or not. What about high school? College? Life is a test, be careful with failing. Stay out and away from shot spots.

New Years

Today is a special day, because it's Vietnamese New Years. I ain't feeling all that good because I'm suppose to be home with the family, celebrating with the friends, going to places, spending lots of money, gambling, but I'm stuck in the hall celebrating by myself.

Now I know not to do bad, so I can be out next year and celebrate. So I'm out for now Happy New Years. Late.

-V

From The Beat: Keep yourself out of here, not just for this next go round, but for good. Happy Vietnamese New Years anyway! Make that promise to yourself to live life right!

Getting Into Things

I have many achievements I have completed. There are many minor problems I have achieved. But there was one that was a big trip for me. It was to stop getting into things. Sounds easy but trust me it's not. I tried so hard and failed a lot.

I had it once. I was doing well, good in school, and staying out of trouble. I was doing it for my family and for myself, so I can stay out free. One thing occurred that I did not commit. I ended in this horrible place.

I felt it was all for nothing, but though again I was actually trying hard to complete and achieve. It sucks to be here for something I did not do. It's all good I will achieve and complete my goal because that's a life time goal.

-Cash

From The Beat: You'll recover from this collapse. You know what though, even though you're in this situation, you still keep the spirit of completing all your goals and achieving many other things. Don't give up on. Let this experience teach you a good lesson. If you want to stay out, stay away from those places or people who can get you into trouble. Simple as that! What are your plans upon your release?

My Achievements - Being A Dad

Well this is your boy Mikie, coming to you from San Jose. Well I'm locked down doing time, but I ain't tripping.

Well I'm gonna talk about my achievements. Well I've never achieved anything, but I think I only achieve one and that was my son. He is the best achievement that I've achieved 'cause I've always wanted a son and now I've got one.

I've never done shhh in my life. I mess up all the time. Now I've started to shoot somewhere and I did.

Now I'm gonna get out, go back to school, then college and work to support my kid. I ain't gonna be like my pops and leave my son alone with his mom. I ain't got nothing else to say, so your boy is out.

I sit back and think about all the pain we caused just cause I was a homeboy down for the hood. Now I got to do my time, so I could do good for my son and be there for that lil' guy. I see him every week and I hope I could get out soon, so I could be the right dad. Well just want to say to everyone to stay up and I'll be out soon much Love n Respect

-Mikie

From The Beat: You wanted a son? Now you got it. Now he wants a dad? Can you give him that? Having a kid is a huge responsibility. We hope you take your words seriously for the good of your son. Good luck!

Things Running Through My Mind

So many things be running through my mind.

I be counting the bricks on my wall,
 trying to pass the time,
 days of my life for a two-minute crime.
 I'm a stick up kid if I see it it's mine.

I should of listened to my mama
 but it flew out my car,
 can't stand to hear my mama sob
 or see her drop a tear

Caged with other gang bangers I can't show no fear.
 I 'm never one-step ahead seems like I'm stuck in first gear.

-Lil' Cyco

From The Beat: What can it take so switch to second and third and last gear? What's holding you back? What's preventing you from moving on? This is the life you chose to live. You can change it at anytime you need it. Try to switch to second gear and let's see what can happen. You won't loose anything by trying. Make your mom proud!

Head High

What's up Beat! It's Trouble. I am going to bust a flow. It is short but good advice for people.

When you feel like your going to cry, just keep looking to the sky.

When it feels like your life is a big lie, just keep strong and problems will be gone. Don't worry, somebody will always be by your side,

just look up and pray Jesus Christ.

If people are putting you down, just get up off the ground,

stand on your feet and show people you ain't a sissy,
 have no fear and shed no tears, and stand strong throughout the years.

Sometimes you wish it would rain. Just keep your head high 'till the day you die.

-Trouble

From The Beat: Thank you for your advice! Is this what you do when you feel depressed? What about moving on with your life? Is all about just praying and keeping your head high? Or is there more than that? What? We need help.

Baby Mama

Damn! Now that I'm locked up. I miss my baby mama mucho(a lot). She don't even know she might be six years older than me but I love her hell. I would love her and make her something to eat. Damn! I hope I get out soon on EMP.

Well I just want to let everybody know that I love my baby mama. Baby girl my one and only. I'm not scared to show that I love my baby mama, my one and only. The one that I love forever, late.

-Lil Blanco

From The Beat: Love is always a beautiful thing but incarceration is no environment for love to grow. If you really have love for your girl next time you come home you'll keep a low profile and not get in trouble so you can spend as much time as you want with her and your baby who needs a father in his/her life.

I'm Gonna Do It!

I'm going to do it like Easy-E.

I'm gonna make money it's gonna be a mystery. I got the detectives with their magnifying glass looking for my finger prints.

I do it like that and I stay on my toes and they trying to bring me low.

-P Nut

From The Beat: Staying on your toes is having the law not looking for your toes at all. If the law is looking for your fingerprints with a magnifying glass eventually he who seeks should find.

My Plans

Well, today I want to write about love ones and life. I'm a 18 year old and I am graduating in April. I'm planning to go to college.

Well I been locked up for 5 months and got 2 more to go. I miss my mom, my little sister, my older sister and most I miss is my ex-girl. The reality is that I'm in here so I have to deal with it. I wish I can go back but I can't.

-Big Plans

From The Beat: Good plans! We hope you make it to college, an university, a good career and a good family. Everything is possible. Don't give up. There are people waiting for you outside. Don't make them wait too long.

Disappointment

I am disappointed that I'm in here about to do 6-8 and that I still got a long time to do. But it is cool. Well, I am going to be out. So later.

-Lil' Halla

From The Beat: Yeah, you will but what are you going to do to stay out the next time to escape that disappointment? We hope you don't take your freedom for granted when you get out. Get out and enjoy your freedom.

RIP Nathan

What's cracking Beat? This is your homie Lil' Man coming from the city of San Jose. Well I ain't feeling these topics so I'm going to write about the homie Nathan.

He passed away a week ago and I found out that he was with the homie White boy. We were tripping out. Well to the homie rest in peace and you will always be remembered and I'll see you pretty soon. Alrato.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend Nathan in a sincere way and we send ours. But you should not be in a hurry to die because you think the homie Nathan is in a hurry to see you or vice versa? How you show the homie Nathan respect is by learning from his mistakes and living to do right.

Family Love

What's up everyone? I just want to let you people know one part of my family that I love a lot besides my mom and dad. One of them is my brother Cisco up in the other unit with my primo Paul. I miss and love the shhh out of both of them they are my partners.

The other part is this one fine sexy lady of mine and her name is Rebecca. I just want to say that I love you a lot and I will always love you. And will wait for you till the end. She is like my best friend, But she's my lady.

Well I just wanted to say what's up and stay up and I love you guys. I'm missing you people. Lots of love.

-Javi

From The Beat: We're pretty sure that they are missing you too. You can't keep coming back to jail forever. Don't you have any goals? Wouldn't you rather be at your pad chilling with your brother and primo? Wouldn't you rather be chilling with that fine lady of yours? All your gonna be chilling with in there, is a bunch of smelly dudes.

Never Going To Stop

What's up Beat? This is your homeboy Sleepy. Well this is about me not ever going to stop smoking or drinking. And I'm never going to stop gang banging. But I'm always going to be there for my family.

I know it's really sad. But I got to do what I have to do most of all my family gangbangers. I already chose the life I live.

Maybe one day I'll go to school or maybe do good, but I know I need to take care of family too. Well that's all I got alrato.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Can't never stop putting in the hard work and doing what you know you have to do to better yourself for your family. When a man lives for his family he learns the true definition of what it means to be a man, yet you are not much of a help once you hit the pinta. So we hope with maturity you see a better way, and you break the cycle.

Family

What's good Beat this your homeboy Sleepy from Santa Clara. Well I'm going to talk about family. My family is very important. I wish I could have been better to them and be good and be respectful to them. And show them a good time and be with them.

Well if anybody reads this, do good and stay out of this place. Don't never come back to juvenile and show your family more respect, alrato.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Jail is always a place to reflect. It's as if the real you came out sitting in a hell cell when you know you deserve better. Remember your words when you touchdown and you'll be like a lifesaver to a dying breed.

Life

What up Beat, I didn't choose any of the topics, sorry!

I'm talkin' 'bout how my life is. My life is cool. I got locked up with my homie Nemo. When me and my homie are on my block with the homies, we get pull over and get searched all the time because I'm straight up Chicano. He knows what I'm talking bout huh, bro?

Well now that I'm locked up I don't get harassed like I use to. Well bro, Nemo stay up! I love you bro, see you when you get out. Stay up I love you bro late!

-Lil' Blanco

From The Beat: There's no future in your front. Wanting to be too overexposed will get you a sunburned. If you want to be looked at as cool stay in school, Chicano or not, there is no excuse for being the fool!

Which Life Do I Choose

I gave my life to the hood,
Running the streets always up to no good.
Always sippin' liquor from my cup,
And always getting locked up.

But I got a family and a girl,
And to me they mean the world.
They want me to live a better life,
And I want my girl to become my wife.

I try to do good in school,
And just play it cool.
But the streets keep calling,
And I keep fallin'
Back into the trap.
Each time I do I find it harder to come back.

But I'll always be down for my homies.
They were always there for me.
And I'll never turn my back
And that's a fact.

I miss my girl, but I gave my homies my word.
I'm so confused.
I don't know what to do.
Please come and save me lord.

-Tjh

From The Beat: If you can't figure out which is more deserving of your time and energy - your child and your girl and your family, or, a group of guys up to no good - then you just keep hanging out with the homies. You watch from a distance while your child grows up confused and disappointed and without a father. Your choice, T. Oh, and don't be asking for someone to save you. You should know by now that you have to save yourself. You're the only one who can do it. (You'll find plenty of folks to help you, but you have to do the heavy lifting. After all, it's your life.)

Wake Up Call

I never thought I would be in juvenile hall. First you're out there living life to the fullest but your living it a little too much. Then you end up gettin' locked up. Now you're living life being told what to do, ordering you around.

People say be thankful for what you got because it could disappear like that. I guess that didn't really matter to when me and the homies were getting drunk. But after it hit me sittin' in my cell that I wasn't thankful for my freedom and now it disappeared. Now I sit here waiting to get cut so that I can change everything around and be thankful.

-ThankfulOne

From The Beat: The most valuable things in life are often the ones we've had all along, and we take them for granted until they're gone. When you say that you were "living life a little too much", it sounds like you felt entitled to your freedom, regardless of your decisions. You say you can't wait until you get out to change things, but why wait until you get out? What can you change today in terms of your attitude, your habits and your goals?

Hard Life

Life is really hard sometimes and sometimes people mess up and it gets even more harder on people. Sometimes people use weed to relax them cause life gets really hard or some people drink but all that shhh messes you up. It's just going to mess up your life and your going to be a bum out on the street. Well that's all I got Beat.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: You're right. There's no way to escape pain. Sometimes you just have to roll with the flow and understand life has its ups and downs but nothing never stays the same.

Myself

My mom was disappointed in me 'cause I had no self-esteem. Whenever I get mad I just go off skating.

Now I'm in here because of my actions. I don't know why I did it, but I turned myself in and now I'm just in here because I want to get rid of my sins. Now when I leave the unit I smell the wind.

-Josiah

From The Beat: It seems as if you caught somewhere between right and wrong. You want to do right because you know that's what's your mom expect of you, but you have to think better of yourself to do right.

Get Out

What's good Beat? This is your homeboy Sleepy from Santa Clara.

Well we need to get out of this messed up place and be good and don't run from the ranch or camp. Don't get locked up. Stay out and remember God comes first, family next and homeboy next. Well that all I got, much love and respect.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: That's the words of a real homeboy. It shows that you really care and that your love isn't water base. Don't ever let no one steal the chemistry y'all share.

Trial

Today I went to court hoping to get released, but my PO didn't recommend anything. I'm 18 and I being charged with a 707b offense (strong armed robbery), which is a strike. My lawyer doesn't want me to take it, so I'm going to trial. I need two of the four witnesses to testify on my behalf in order to get my charges dropped to an accessory. So, I got trial on March 20. If my witnesses don't testify, then I'm going to just plead guilty and get it over with, cause I ain't got time to be wastin' with my life. Well that's it, Beat.

-Yung Sha T.

From The Beat: It seems like this situation has really gotten you down, but you know what you have to do. Your dedication to going back to your life will get you there. Stay positive and believe in your advocates and those that want the best for you. Ask questions!!!

Mi Vida Loca

Q-vole Beat? Today I'm going to write about my crazy life. I've been kicking it with the homies since I was 11 years old.

I never grew up in a loving environment, so I had to go out and find love from other people. So I started kicking it with the homies and found a family that showed me love. I grow up with them and lived in their hood, but when I was a young teen - I moved to Estrella Street. I have been living there for five years and I guess I can manage for now. I hella miss the environment and the people, of course, the homies.

Now that I'm 18, I kind of miss that I grow up so fast. But life goes on.

Well, I should be taking my CAHSEE this week I'm worried but I know that I will pass it, so will my brother. Well, I'm out of here in three months.

To all: keep your head up. Oh and I found love from my mom.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Growing up too fast is something to be kind of sad about. But you can always go back to the innocent days of youth by not hanging out on the streets and going sober. Maybe that will make you feel like a kid again.

Trying To Get Out

What's good? This is Sleepy from Santa Clara. Well, I'm getting out April 17, 2008. I have hall time right now. It's hella whack. I wish I could get out and be out with my family and be good to them and show them respect. I wish one could be with the hood, every one be good and stay up.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: You'll have your chance to get out just don't waste it. Most of you guys always talk about getting out and wanting to show respect to your family but then you forget all about that once you walk right out those Juvenile hall doors. We hope that you don't forget and really show your parents how much you love them and respect them.

No Double Life For Me

What up, Beat?

Well, I don't think I live a double life. You can say I act different when I am with my homies than with my family. Because when I'm with my family I am sober and I don't talk as much – I just chill and watch T.V and maybe smoke cigarettes, but when I'm with my homies, I will be high, drunk, laughing and just chilling.

I do get drunk with my mom once in a while like on holy days, or I drink when I'm with my dad but I got to sneak it in my room and get drunk and then I can go out and have a good time.

-Troublez

From The Beat: Hmmm, even though you say you don't have a double life, it kind of sounds like you do. One good question to ask yourself is if you are a totally different person when you are high/drunk versus when you are sober. Most people are different around their family and their friends, but just keep tabs that it isn't a radical difference.

Hard

You think you're hard?

But you can't act real.

You can't act real

'cause you think you're hard?

It doesn't matter what you are,
or what you think you are.

If you can't act real or hard
in front of you family and your homies,
you are nothing, a fake, a phony.

-Fattie Whompus

From The Beat: This is funny. Where do you think you fall into this spectrum: are you a fake or a phony or a real homie?

What's Next For Me?

Hey, what's good? It's been pretty stressful in here for the fifth time in twelve months. This time my PO and judge are just running down time until I turn 18, which is on April 9th.

I didn't even do anything. I was locked up for my own safety because I have no place to live.

I was supposed to be working at the DMV and everything, but it's all good 'cause on the 11th, I'm going to take two more of my GED tests. I passed one already. Plus, I just finished my college applications for the summer and the fall.

Well anyways, when I get out I just know I'm going to be making mine. Well, to all that are going to be here for a while – stay up and it'll get better. To the guys trying to talk in the hallways – thanks for getting me in trouble.

-Gualdarama

From The Beat: It must be interesting to be locked up just because of your safety. You mentioned that you were excited but worried about getting out. It seems like you really have your life together, so just be confident that you will be able to take care of yourself.

Disappointment

I choose this topic for many reasons because I know I disappointed my sister by ending up back in here. I should have listened to my sister because she's the only one that showed me so much more love than my own mom. She put a roof over my head when I didn't have anywhere else to go. I thank God for my sister cause without her I would of ended up just like my mom, or worse.

I'm hurting inside 'cause I know that I make her cry every night 'cause I'm her baby sister, and she truly cares a lot about me. I put more stress on her, which I should not 'cause, she has enough stress already. If I continue to go down the path that I'm going, I think that maybe she would just say "you know what I can't take it anymore." I just feel like she'll give up on me like everybody else that was in my life. I don't know what I would do without my sister in my life. 'Till next time Beat.

-Lil' Shawty Vivian

From The Beat: Awareness is sometimes the first step into change. It seems like you know that losing your temper and messing up will hurt your sister, so maybe you will think about that next time. Keep your head up, Vivian!

This Life

Well, this is the homeboy Shrek from San Jose. Well, I just found out that my little cousin passed away not too long ago and it hurt me to know that 'cause he was younger than me. My mom had twins and I wasn't able to go see them.

My Tia Huera is having a baby and my Tia Nish is having another one I heard.

My cousin Savage is locked up and my cousin Laura is locked up too. It sucks 'cause I'm having a baby too and I'm not getting out until December or in the beginning of '09.

And to my cousins Savage and Laura: keep your heads up and I'll be praying for you guys. Don't trip off me! I'll be out soon enough. To all, do your time and stay strong, they can't keep us down. When you get out this time, stay out.

- Shrek

From The Beat: It sounds like you should take your own advice about staying out, especially because you are realizing how much life goes on when you are locked up – births and deaths. Don't keep yourself down forever!! Wake up now!

One Life

I don't get this double life topic, so I'm going to be real. I live one life which involves gangbanging, but I'm not looking forward to prison. I'm trying to do good, get a job and make something of myself being a banger is just in my heart but I want to do good which can be done without a doubt. This G bird is out. Stay up.

-Birdie

From The Beat: If you are not looking forward to prison, why are you heading in that direction? Wake up and fly away.

Thanks Beat

What's good Beat it's ya boy Young Cash. I just want to say thank you for letting me express myself for all these years. But it's time for me to go. I'm 18 now, so that means you won't be able to see me anymore. Farewell Beat. You know I'm gone, do it for the last time before I leave right.

-Young Cash

From the Beat: We'll miss your voice, Cash. You always seem to find something to express in a truly honest way. All the best on the outs.

Dear The Beat

Why don't people accept my religion? I have the right to worship Satan as much as anyone else, right? Tell me how you feel?

-Bradley

From The Beat: Worship whoever you want to worship. Be smart about your choices. Do you really care what others think?

No Fairytale

I'm going to tell you another tale but it's not no fairytale. I would sell drugs for my mom. We lived with some Pisa – it was their house. We rented out a room – it was hella small. Me, my mom, her boyfriend and three little siblings were living there. And we did not have a lot of food because we would always eat it all the time. But then one time some fool snitched my mom out, so it was me and my three siblings. I took care of them, sold more drugs, paid rent, got some food for my little siblings. Then me and my mom's boyfriend saved some money and got my mom out. Then one day I saw the guy that snitched my mom out, and beat that fool up. Well, I got to go, stop snitching.

-Chino

From The Beat: This non-fairytale is really powerful, about how you and your mother took care of your family through illegal activities. Again, you seem proud of the violence – can you see any other way?

Troubled and Confused

I think the court is troubled and confused, especially my probation officer because they don't understand when they see a changed person. I know now that I'm glad for my choices, but being in here for a crime I didn't do makes me want to do the crime or wish I did. But now I'm glad I've done everything I've done in my life. I don't regret any of it because I wouldn't be who I am today. But as they say, life's a bummer, then you die.

-Anthony

From The Beat: The system – when it's wrong – can certainly turn people into angry criminals. But instead of inspiring you to a life of crime, maybe you should become a lawyer and fix the problems so it doesn't happen to anyone else.

Me and You

Me and you forever long,
even though you were always gone.
Why wouldn't you stay with me?
I would always be so sadly.
Now that we've found each other
I couldn't love her more than my mother.
I felt like a fool,
'cause she treats me so cruel.
I only had eyes for her,
but who does she have eyes for?
I have lost her one more time
and now she's forever gone,
she is somewhere near to me,
but how would I talk to her?
I guess when I get out,
and wait 'till she gets out.
I miss her.
I hope they put this in The Beat,
so she could see this lil' note.
Alrato I'm out.

-Jacob

From The Beat: This poem sounds like you have been longing for someone from far away for a long time. Love combined with doubt can be really painful in the heart, but it sounds like you care for this person. Writing is a good way to express this feeling.

One Love

What's up Beat? Today I'm gonna talk about my leaving to the Ranch. I'm hella happy I'm gonna be leaving in five days.

Damn, I'm just kind of sad though because I got people here that I'm gonna miss, you know, but damn I just gotta go.

I've been here since December 11th just doing hella dead time. There's one specific person I'm gonna miss that's in here. I gave it up to him and now I really care about him a lot and I got feelings for him, too. I think I kind of love him, but damn it's crazy though. I had found out at a program that he was going to have a daughter. That really hurt me because I really cared about him, but I guess I will just have to wait to talk to him to tell him how I really feel about him. But if you're reading this baby – I love you and I really care about you even though we're not together. I'm thinking bout you 24/7. Be cool and stay up, baby boy. To all, much love and respect to all

-Athina

From The Beat: It is hard to find out someone we really care about is going through something so profound like having a child with another person, but the best thing is to keep jealousy in check and work to be honest to your true emotions.

Double-Sided Life

When I am out I think I live two lives. Every morning I wake up I go to school. But after school I would act hella different. In school I wouldn't smoke but when out of school I smoke and drink. Now that I am locked up I look back at my life and now I think I should have quit doing drugs 'cause they really broke my life and it also broke up my family.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: In some ways, we all lead multiple lives. We behave differently depending on who we interact with. As you say, you are one person when in school and listening to your teachers. You are another person when with your homies and quite another at the dinner table. It seems then that one source of your troubles has to do with the company you keep. Could your incarceration have been avoided by avoiding the negative influences in your life? Let us know.

My Serious Case

What's with it Beat? I just got locked up for pullin' a lick with my ninja. I went to court and they said I might get six months hall time or YA and do four years. But it's a 50-50 chance for either one,. But I'm fighting for hall time and I might get it 'cause I'm 18 and they ain't sending people to YA in this county unless you got a real case, but my case is just first degree robbery so I ain't trippin'. Just gonna do my time and get out in the fall, like September. You feel me?

I been messing up lately, 'cause I got in like two fights and I been here less than two weeks. I'm too old to be gettin' into fights in the hall. I mean, if somebody disrespect me off top, but fo' dumb shhhh? I'm good. You can see me on the outs, you feel me? Plus it don't help my case, and it only last up to 15 to 20 sec. before staff get on you mean, ya dig? But forget the dumb shhhh though, man.

I gotta say what's good to D-man. Hey bra, do good when you get out –maintain that playa composer. Just gotta get this daycare time over, you feel. So I'm out one time, one love D, an fo' the record I changed the name but the style the same, ya dig?

-Ali

From The Beat: It sounds like you know that getting into fights when locked up isn't a smart thing, but how do you keep yourself cool? And you sound like you're really looking forward to getting back out on the streets, but what changes are you thinking about out there?

Stressing Out

Q-vole Beat. This is your homie Chato from San Jose. I am gonna write some lines about stressing out. These days I been stressing a lot for my lady because she's pregnant, she's 9 months already, and I can't talk to her. I wish I could be with her these special moments, 'cause I really care for my girl and I love her with all my heart. But the good thing is that I'll be out in 20 days to be with my girl.

So if you vatos got a firme jaina get straight and don't do bad choices so you won't end up in here stressing out.

Well this vato is outta time alratos.

-Chato

From The Beat: Being away from the ones you love can be really hard. So do what you can now to make your time with them as good as possible. We wish you and your girl the best.

Back

I'm back in the hall
Eye red from tears brewin'
Getting ready to fall
Once again I stack
With my back against
The wall
Facing time for a crime
That I never committed.
All the girls I came with
The time they had to split
Gone here and there
Fe-fe don't have
No fear
Because the change
Is here

-Young Cash

From The Beat: It's a very good sign that this is your first instinct. The mark of maturity is to find the good in the worst situation and to be ready to turn tragedy into learning. Sitting in that cell here looks to be your moment of maturity. In this desire, this sadness, this memory, this drive, the change is there.

Double Life

Yes, I admit I have a double life 'cause when I am with my friends it is a whole different lifestyle, 'cause I really try to impress my friends. I don't know why but I do. But when I am with my family I try to be an angel, 'cause my mom thinks I'm a good kid so I be actin' like that. I mean, I have love for my friends and I know they got love for me but I know it's my friends who are the ones that got me in here, but if it weren't for my friends I would be out and doing good in school.

-Nomal

From The Beat: It's easy to put the blame on our friends, but what about you? Can't you be a certain way and still hang around certain friends. We're not saying it's easy, but we hear so many of you blaming your friends that it seems a bit unfair.

A Beat Disappointment

What up beat? Today I'm not feeling the topics so I want to say that I'm disappointed because I haven't seen any of my pieces for months now. I would like to know what's going on because I don't even see that much Santa Clara County. Well Beat this Duke is out. Late.

-Duke

From The Beat: If you do not see much of Santa Clara in The Beat, ask someone on the unit to point it out to you, given Santa Clara dominates The Beat!

What I Think About

What's crackin' Beat? Me just chilling up in the unit, well I'm feeling really good in the inside because my time is going by fast. The staff here are very coo' we do lots of activities such as play football, basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, and many more. I love it. At first I thought that max was the best but when I came to this unit it was coo as hell. I mean the staff really try to help you out.

Some people think that they're weak, but I think that they're wrong. If you act like a kid they're going to treat you like one. But if you do what you got to do and take care of business it's all good. But don't get me wrong, I still miss max. Well what I'm trying to say is there are kids here that are 18 but don't act like they are. There are kids that are 17 and act older.

All I'm trying to say is take care of business in the unit and everything will be coo and just worry about yourself and most likely get as many things that you can from the program. Do your thing and get out and stay out.

-New Beginning

From The Beat: You make a good point. Maturity is not a time of life but a state of mind and action. I hope as many people as possible read and heed your advice.

Disappointment, A Big Word

Wow. Disappointment. That's a big word and well my life is made up of disappointment. My whole life I have done nothing but disappoint my family and loved ones. But at the same time I have had someone I love very much disappoint me.

But I'm sick of making my family and loved ones cry for my stupidity. I'm done with all the wrong decisions. I'm going to start to go the right way in my life. I want to stay alive and see what I got ahead of me. And for the one that disappointed me I tried to help her but she never learned so I made the right decision and left her.

-Enmik

From The Beat: There is a strong sense of maturity in this piece. Thank you for your honesty about disappointment. How can you follow up with your passionate statements about going the right way in life? We hope you keep growing and that you continue to strive to make the right decisions.

Skater

Everywhere I am I skate. I skateboarded for the first time when I was 1 and never stopped. I can honestly thank skateboarding for getting me active and healthy, for providing me with a creative outlet, and though I found and abused drugs, it kept me away from the hard ones for a long time. Yes, it got me in a little trouble here and there but I think all young boys are meant to be rowdy, on or off a skate. And that's what I have to write about tonight.

The majority of adults hate on skateboarding, and the majority of kids love it. Skater = Jock in a lot of ways in today's society. I mean, popular TV shows, billion dollar industry, massive influence in teenage style, and of course teeny bop skate star Ryan Sheckler. But that doesn't matter. I don't really care about this shhh. I just felt like ending a page of writing with some stupid apathetic statement. Really I just wanted to say apathetic in a sentence!

-RadSkaterOne

From The Beat: You have a point. Adults tend to overlook skateboarding as a sport, an art, and a passion. Like most passions, it's rarely going to make a career, but it helps to train the body and mind, and can be your creative outlet. Ride away.

Disappointment In Me

Well I have disappointed my mom. I know I've done many things to make her mad, but it's whatever. I love my mom. I know that when I get out we will have movie fests like we used to. I miss her. Well alrato. Late.

-Son

From The Beat: We appreciate the fact that you recognize that you have disappointed one of the most important people in your life. But why is it "whatever"? What can you do to not upset her as much? We hope you will be able to have many movie fests in the near future.

Tattoo

My tattoo of choice would be a contradiction between light and darkness. So you can notice the difference of dark and light. Something so abstract that you have to feel it. Why would you be the dark and why would you be the light?

-Contrast

From The Beat: These are very intriguing words. The tattoo sounds fascinating and thoughtful. Do you have any other thoughts on how light conflicts with darkness? How does the figurative light and darkness play a part in your life?

Double-Life Dude

I kind of live the double life 'cause I could be very nice and generous and I could be very respectful and have a lot of manners when I want, but at the same time I could be mean and cruel and very disrespectful. That's why I could have a double-life sometimes.

-Dude

From The Beat: With the knowledge that you live a double-life, can you tell us if you think this is a good thing? When can living a double-life be a positive thing? When can it be a negative? We thank you for your honesty and hope you understand that all of us, at one time or another, live the so-called double life.

The things I've been through made me the way I am. I've been like this forever and you people want me to change just like that.

The Disappointment

The disappointment is like pain, when people go insane. But yet even though people have disappointment we're trying to maintain.

They put us in a lonely room with our brain killing itself, crazy thought of how we really felt. Having no mail brings you down, so you're just chilling at your room laying down, then wicked thoughts snap in your head telling you to stop crying and make people feel your pain, not trying to show your roommate the tears that are falling off your eyes, feeling the fear. But no one can help you, not even yourself, everyone sees you and they think you're a thief, talking to someone you don't feel no relief. But 'till next time I let you know on these things.

-Poiyoisito

From The Beat: Sometimes everything seems to be haunting you, no matter how many people you talk to or times you check for mail. Don't be afraid to let it out, and let your process take over. Be sad, yes, but try to channel that into a better future.

Tattoos Removed And Added

If I were to get one of my tattoos taken off it would be the tatt on my side of California. I would rather get it professionally done. If I could get any tatt I wanted right now it would be of a collage of a certain place that no one will ever find. And I'd like to finish the two tats that represent my parents.

-Tat man

From The Beat: The tattoo of the collage sounds really interesting. What kind of place would that be? Where would it be? In the woods? On a beach somewhere? Maybe you could expand on this thought and talk about where you want to go to be by yourself. Thanks for the cool idea!

Just a Dream

Sometimes I dream about a life where we're strong.
Where we don't have to fight no more and get along
No use in crying no more pain to carry on
It's just a dream so I live and hold on.

- Tuan

From The Beat: This is a short but sweet rhyme. We can tell you have a talent for expressing yourself through your words. Keep writing!

Changing Life

Changing life is a hard thing to do for me because I've grown up a different lifestyle than others, I've seen things others never seen before. The things I've been through made me the way I am. I've been like this forever and you people want me to change just like that. I don't know 'bout that, but I'll try my best and my hardest to change my bad habits. I know I'm going to have to change for the better, and for my family. But that's all I got to talk about for now Beat. Talk to you next time, late.

-Lil' V

From The Beat: You're right. You can't change everything instantly just by waving a wand. But you also seem to recognize that that doesn't mean you can't try. Life tends not to break to anyone, but it bends at each push, and with each try you can make your life a little bit better, and a little bit more how you want it.

Disappointment In The Homie

The only time I was disappointed was when my homie was lying to my lady that I was hitting on some girls while I was in school. And when she found out she went crazy and I started laughing 'cause I thought she was playing so she slapped me back to my senses, and when she was talking to me I knew my homies were up to this because they did not want to see us together so I told her the truth on what was happening and I apologized to her and we made up so this is it for my case of disappointments.

-Rascal

From The Beat: Those you trust the most are often the first to disappoint. Try to trust anyway, just as your girl has trusted your explanation, so that you have a chance to live without constant disappointment.

The Life

I'd rather choose the life of gangbanging 'cause that's how I'm gonna live for the rest of my life. And I end up going to the (pinta) like my Brother that is now doing sixteen to life for armed robbery. And I pray I would go to the same prison in Chino, 'cause as a young gangsta I didn't have any role models, just young gangsters who I idolize.

-Tragic homeboy

From The Beat: This is so pathetic, that all you have is gang banging to hold onto. How old are you? Are there really no other options? Please.

What Makes Me Angry, Interview

The Beat: What makes you angry?

Albert: Life. Half the people in the world are racist. People think I'm a savage. I'm part Spanish, part Mexican, part Portuguese- and I'm happy with it.

The Beat: What do racists do that affects you?

Albert: they say I'm a Beaver, a dirty Mexican- that I won't be good for anything.

The Beat: How do you cope with that?

Albert: I try to ignore it but sometimes I can't. I get into difficult situations where I do things I wish I hadn't done- afterwards- when I think about it.

The Beat: What is your advice about how to handle anger?

Albert: Walk away, try to ignore it. If you don't, you'll pay a heavy price for it- loneliness and being away from your loved ones.

-Albert

From The Beat: It is a tragedy that racism still exists in the world. Your cultural background is something to be very proud of. People who ridicule you because of your race are doing so out of anger about their own troubled circumstances. You are right to walk away; to realize that their words are not based on truth. Being able to be with the ones you love is well worth ignoring ignorant comments.

My Pain

I am so sad because my dad and my brother got stabbed. I'm mad- I feel like hurting someone but that is going to get me into trouble. I've learned to just let it go because it's never going to stop. It is like I'm a psycho- I hurt them and they are going to hurt me too. They were my friends but they are now my enemies because I stopped gangbanging. They will go for your loved ones- it is so stupid.

-D

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear about your dad and your brother. It is very normal to feel angry in your situation, but you know that hurting other people in retaliation is not the answer. It only causes more pain and more trouble. We applaud your tough- and wise- decision to get out of the gang life. Talk with your counselors about help in protecting your loved ones.

No Title

My heart aches.

No one's answering, no one's there.

I crossed the border to hell,

Bruises on my mind,

No chance to get out of the hall.

'I'm dancing with the devil.'

My desire is to be free.

My future is in my hands and on my mind.

The DA is making me go down like gravity.

I hunger for freedom. It's what I seek.

-Robert

From The Beat: We've heard that the devil has great rhythm. Is that true?

How I Handle My Anger

What's up Beat? The way I handle my anger is to just start punching my punching bag, or sometimes I just have to take it out on someone else. The only way I'll get mad is if someone disrespects me. Respect is a big word for me. That's all for today, lates.

-Robert

From The Beat: Punching bag - OK. Using a human being for a punching bag - not OK. We know you know that. Make this your mantra: living creatures are not punching bags...living beings are not punching bags... living beings are not punching bags... Got it?

LOVE

I love you-
your tender touch

but every night

hasn't been alright

without you here

near, my dear.

My heart cries

and my eyes sigh,

my body aches,

my head shakes.

I need you

so I can go through

all the rough roads

they are going to set in front of you.

Just know that I am here

to hold you dear.

When I get out

don't even hold out

because I am your man.

I am never going to be shady

'cause you're my baby.

Just always know

I will always be waiting

for that day you'll arrive

by my side

to make it better,

so you better remember

I am still waiting

'cause I'll do anything

for you.

-D

From the Beat: It is difficult, no doubt, to be away from loved ones while serving your time. It can be a source of strength when those people are supportive and painful if they decide to move in other directions. Try to remember that your true strength is found within yourself. Your relationships with others will be stronger once you are on your own solid ground.

The Anger Interview

The Beat: How do you deal with your anger?

Ronnie: I can't. If someone looks at me wrong I'll sock him because he's making me angry.

The Beat: Why can't you just walk away?

Ronnie: It will make me look like a little girl and a coward.

The Beat: So what? What happens if you beat that person up because you want to save face?

Ronnie: I get locked up, and locked up again... for longer. I don't care.

The Beat: Do you want to learn to control your anger? What could motivate you to not loose your temper... for better or worse?

Ronnie: If I could control my anger I could stay out of here. I'd rather be at home kicking it with my friends.

The Beat: What are ways that you can think of to do this?

Ronnie: Maybe when I start to get angry I can think about my girlfriend or my mom and remember how much I want to stay with them. I can't think more about how to say it.

-Ronnie

From the Beat: Controlling our anger can be a difficult thing, but something we must learn to do in order to lead a healthy life- a free life- and to avoid causing harm to other people. Think about what you have to loose by getting in trouble because of your temper, and what you have to gain by staying out of trouble- mostly the ability to be with your loved ones. Your counselors can help you with way to deal with anger constructively. It is worth it.



Control The Mad

When I am disappointed I usually get mad or frustrated and easily annoyed. I punch shhh. But I'm trying to change how I react to people and situations.

-David

From The Beat: Good.

Cleaning Up For The County Rather Than For Yo' Mama

Well, the only reason that I clean right here in the hall is so that I will have more time out of my room and I won't be stuck there all alone. There are benefits like getting to buy stuff from the store. But, don't get me wrong, I do clean for my mom, all the time, and I keep my room clean.

So, If I were The Beat, I wouldn't just go around assuming that we convicts don't clean after ourselves in our house.

-"Inocente"

From The Beat: No offence intended. We're glad you're a tidy fellow and that you help your mom.

Let Me Out

I want to get out but they won't let me.
I want to walk around but they won't let me.
I want to talk freely but they won't let me.

So what do I do?

Just get out.

But to get out... what to do?

I don't know, it's so confusing.

I can't even think sometimes.

I hate this place.

I hate most of the people here.

I hate this place, and I hate this place.

Let me out.

I'm bored, I'm bored.

-Seeking Freedom

From The Beat: Sometimes even negative motivation can serve to move us in a positive direction. We are sorry to hear that you are so unhappy with your current situation. Use those feelings to motivate you to do what's necessary to get out- and to stay out of the system. You can walk and talk and do whatever you want once you are living a life within the law. It is worth it.

Aching

Someone approaches to say
his life is aching, he's in pain.

There is no answer-

borderline, life, or death.

The bruises will never heal.

There is no chance.

He's dancing, in the future,
but gravity pulls him back into hunger.

-Shane

From The Beat: Cool poem, Shane. We suspect you know this, but it's a neat trick to learn how to dance with gravity. The fall is easier.

Interview with Answer

The Beat: How long have you been here?

Answer: Since December.

The Beat: So, in all that time, what have you learned about yourself?

Answer: I've learned that I can take a lot of crap and put up with it for a long time. I've learned that I want an education in everything, especially in cultural history.

The Beat: What's the most interesting piece of cultural history you've learned?

Answer: From the Aztec Empire- the last ruler of the empire was named Quactemo. He was willing to fight with his soldiers. He went into battle against the Spaniards. Other rulers were greedy. But he was out there for the betterment of his people.

The Beat: Are there any leaders today who remind you of him?

Answer: Cesar Chavez. He was out for his people but in a different era, a different age.

The Beat: What would you like to be asked?

Answer: I'd like to be asked my opinion of the juvenile justice system. If I were I would say that a lot of times they set kids up for failure. For instance- when they sent me to a group home, I protested and said it would be a bad idea. I told them if I went there, it would be all bad. They didn't believe me. It was bad because of where it was located. I'd rather not say why.

The Beat: Any final thoughts?

Answer: I'm bored. I thought the interview was going to be more fun.

-Answer

From The Beat: OK - next time write your own 'interesting' piece.

Mi Vida Sin Un Celular

Yo les voy a contar sobre mi vida sin un celular. Cuando estaba allá afuera, tenía mi celular. La verdad es que lo necesitaba para comunicarme con mi familia, pero especialmente con mi novia.

Recuerdo que aveces por estar hablando y textiando me salió muy caro el bill del teléfono. Tuve que esperarme y no lo pude pagar. Me salió de 300 dolares y eso es muy caro. Luego andaba pidiendo prestado el teléfono de mis amigos o aveces cambiaba billetes en coras para hablar a través del teléfono público.

Recuerdo que un día que me había quedado de ver con mi novia en las gradas de la playa. Tenía que salirme de la escuela para ir a verla, pero no podía llamarme porque no tenía teléfono. Agarré coras y le llamé desde un teléfono público. Cuando contestaba ella, no me podía oír, la llamé de nuevo por otro teléfono y fue la única forma para hablar con ella. Al fin nos vimos.

From The Beat: Lo bueno que ese día pudiste ver a tu novia aunque hayas tendido complicaciones. Tienes que buscar la forma como cuidar el estado de cuenta de tu teléfono. Tienes que ser un poco más considerable con quien lo pague. El o ella debe trabajar duro para pagar eso. Y eso no es justo!

My Life Without A Cell Phones

I'm going to write about my life without a cell phone. When I was on the outs, I had a cell phone. Truth is that I needed it to communicate myself with my family and especially my girlfriend.

I remember talking and texting so much, the cell phone bill was very high. I had to wait for long time, because I couldn't pay it. It was 30 dollars and that's very expensive. Later I was asking my friends to use theirs and changing dollar bills for quarters to use the public phones.

I remember one day I was supposed to meet my girl by the beach. I had to leave school to see her, but she couldn't call me because I didn't have a cell phone. When she answered, she couldn't, I called her again through a different phone and I finally got to talk to her.

-Lil' Snoopy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Good thing was that you made it to see your girl without any more conflicts. You have to find a way to manage the cost of your monthly bill. You have to be more considerable with whoever pays it. He or she might work so hard to pay that. Think of them. That's not right!

Ya No Fumaré En La Calle

Yo fumo mucha mota en mi casa y en la calle. Fumo todas las noche como mi homies. En las noches, fumo para poder dormirme. Sin la mota yo no puedo dormir. Ya no voy a fumar en la calle para no volver a la juvenile. Esto ya no me gusta y no me ha gustado. A mí me gusta la mota.

From The Beat: Deberías de buscar la manera como no fumar del todo. Lo que estas haciendo no te llevará a nada bueno. No hay mejor cosa como disfrutar las maravilla de la vida sobrio y sano. Si de verdad piensas que no puedes dajarlo, deberías de buscar ayuda profesional. Hay programas para jóvenes que te pueden ayudar.

I Won't Smoke On The Streets

I smoke a lot of weed in my house and at home. I smoke every night with my friend. At night, I smoke to be able to sleep because without it, I can't sleep.

I'm not going to smoke anymore so I won't end up in here again. I don't like it here and I never liked it. I like weed.

-Lil' Ba, San Francisco

From The Beat: Find a way to stop smoking. What you are doing won't take you anywhere. There isn't such a thing than enjoying life clean and sober. If you don't have the will power to quit, you should ask for professional help. There are programs for youth that can help you.

El Teléfono

Si cuando uno no tiene un teléfono, no puede comunicarse con su madre, con sus hermanos y sus amigos. Cuando yo venía para acá, venía aburrido en el bus porque no traía teléfono. Una vez lo traía y se me cayo. Venía bien aguitado. Despues estaba quitandolo prestado.

Yo me sentía bien raro porque no pude comunicarme con el quien me iba a recoger en la estación de los buses. Tuve que quitar prestado y gracias a Dios me lo prestaron. Se siente bien feo pedir prestado el telefono después de andar teléfono.

From The Beat: La verdad es que es muy importante la comunicación a través del teléfono. Lo bueno es que llegastes aquí sin ningún problema. Cuidate amigo y te deseamos que cuides tu teléfono al igual que a ti mismo.

The Telephone

When someone doesn't have a phone, you can't communicate with your mother, brothers and friends. When I was on my way here, I was very bored, because I didn't have a phone. I was carry one once and I lost it. I was very sad. Later, I was asking to use other's phones.

I would feel very afraid because I couldn't communicate myself the one who was going to pick me up at the bus station. I had to ask someone to use his phone and thank God, they lent it to me. It feels very embarrassing to ask someone to use his phone after having one.

-Denis, San Francisco

From The Beat: The truth is that it is very important the phone communication. Good thing was that you made without anymore complications. Take care my friend and we hope you take care of your next cell phones as well as yourself.

Solo Un Milagro De Dios

Soy una persona normal como todos. Estoy aquí por tercera vez en esta lugar. Ya he estado en este lugar, pero nunca me había sentido tan mal. No me importa nada porque voy a salir de este lugar.

Dios me va a ayudar en mi cambio porque El es el único que me puede ayudar. Una noche soñaba que solo un milagro de Dios puede ayudar. Yo le prometí a Dios que no a hacer lo mismo. Así como yo puedo cambiar así también ustedes pueden.

Yo quiero a una muchacha y voy a ser papa. Voy a hacer un efuerzo a cambiar. Si tú confías en Dios, todo se puede. Ánimos Catrachos!

From The Beat: Esperamos que llegues a cumplir esa promeza. Acuerdate que ya has venido varias veces y seria una pena que terminaras aquí otra vez. Sigue en el camino de Dios y ponle mucha mente a sus palabras para que seas una persona mejor en la vida.

Only A God Miracle

I am a normal person like others. I'm here for the third time in this place. I've been here in this place before, but I never felt bad. I don't care though because I'm going to get out from this place.

God will help me in my changing because He is the only one that can help. I promise to God that I won't do the same. The way I can change, you can also change.

I love a girl and I'm going to be a father. I'm going to make an effort to change. If you have faith in God, He can do it all for you.

-Anónimo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you keep that promise. Remember that you've been here a few times and it would be ashamed if you end up here again. Keep yourself in God's road and make an effort in following His words.

La Última Vez

La última vez que limpie el baño de mi casa fue en el 2007. A mí aquí sí me gusta limpiar porque me gusta estar afuera y no estar encerrado en el cuarto. En otra parte, lo hago porque me ponen y no porque quiera. La neta es lo hago porque me gusta.

Yo vivo una doble vida porque en las mañanas me la paso en la calle. Me gusta divertirme, salir a bailar, a pasear con la novia que también se divierte con mis amigos. La verdad es que no me gusta estar aburrido porque me sofoco. Les doy gracias por escucharme y comprenderme.

Cuando tenía un celular era muy desesperante porque quería ver a mi novia. Tenía que esperar a que me llamara para hablar con ella.

From The Beat: En vez de andar en la calle deberías de buscar la manera como hacer algo positivo en tu vida, algo que te lleve a un buen mañana. Esa doble vida que llevas te llevará al mismo lugar donde te encuentras en este mismo momento. Hay manera como divertirse, pero la manera que has buscado no es la que te conviene. Busca como ayudar a tu familia en la casa como lo haces en este lugar.

The Last Time

The last time I cleaned the bathroom of my house was in 2007. I like to clean because I like to be out and not locked up in a room. On the other hand, I do it because they make me and not because I want to. Truth is that I do it because I like it.

I live a double life because in the morning I like to spend it on the outs. I like to have fun, go dancing, go out with my girl and have fun with my friends. Truth is that I don't like to be bored because I get desperate. I thank you for listening and understanding me.

When I had a cell phone, I was desperate because I wanted to see my girl. I had to wait for her to call me to be able to talk to her.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: Instead of being on the streets, you should find the way to do something positive for your life, something that can take you to a better tomorrow. That double life will only take you to the same place where you are right now. There are ways to have fun, but the way you have searched for won't benefit you at all. Try to help your family at home like you do here.

Cuando Pienso

Yo cuando me siento solo me pongo a pensar en mi familia en cuanto me quieren y que mi mama me está esperando. Deseo verla. La quiero.

Deseo salir para cambiar mi vida y ser alguien. Quiero que mi familia se sienta orgulloso de mí y de lo que hago. Cuando salga de aquí, voy a cambiar mi vida. Que Dios me ayude.

From The Beat: Esperamos que tus palabras sean sinceras. Afuera tienes persona que esperan que tus palabras se hagan realidad. Sino quieres hacer un cambio por ti, hazlo por aquellos quienes quieren lo mejor para ti.

When I Think

When I feel alone, I think about my family, I think about how much they love me and that my mom is waiting for me. I wish to see her. I love her.

I wish to get out to change my life and be somebody. I want my family to feel proud of me, and the things I'll do. When I get out of here, I'm going to change my life. God help me.

-Juan, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope your words to be honest. On the outs, there are people who expect those words you are writing to become a reality. If you don't want to change for yourself, think about those who want the best for you.



Pensamientos De Los Temas

La verdad es yo asiaba mi casa. La última vez que lo hice fue un día antes de que me agarraran. A mí sí me gusta ser asiado. Aquí encerrado soy asiado no por fuerza sino lo tengo que hacer.

La verdad a es que a mí me gusta vivir la doble vida. Me gusta andar en la calle bagando, divirtiendome con mis amigos, con mi novia, salir a Paris a comer.

La verdad es que me llega el football y divertirme con mis amigos jugando football.

Quisiera decirle que cuando estoy desesperado, me gusta relajarme para que no me peguen ancias de llegar a algo más. Me gusta pensar en mi madre cuando estoy desesperado para relajarme. También me gusta hablar con ella y estar con mis amigos para relajarme y divertirme.

From The Beat: Nos parece bien que pienses en hacer algo diferente cuando tengas ancias de hacer algo que te pueda meter en problemas o lastimar a alguien. Piensa en tu madre no solo cuando vayas a hacer algo sino a todo momento.

My Thoughts About The Topics

The truth is that I used to clean my house. The last time I did it was when a day before I got locked up. I'm clean when I'm here locked up, but not because I'm being forced. I just like it.

Truth is that I like to live the double life. I like to be on the streets kicking it, having fun with my friends, girl, and to go to Paris to eat.

I like football and like to have fun playing football with my friends.

I would like to tell you that when I'm desperate, I like to relax so I won't get the desire of doing something wrong. I like to think about my mother when I'm desperate to relax. I also like to talk to her and be with my friends to relax and have fun.

-Francisco, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a good think to think about doing something positive when you get the temptations of doing something that will get you in trouble or hurt others. Think about your mother not just before doing something, but at all times.

Me

I'm me... no one else but me. If you were to ask me to describe myself, I would say this: I'm Latino, I'm tall, black hair... That's how I would describe how I look.

But if you want to know me, this is what I have to say: I'm sixteen, I like going to school, my life's ambition is to graduate from college, stay alive, have a family of my own, want kids, a beautiful, loving wife, a good-paying job, my parents and relatives.

One of the things I want most is respect. I want to know who my birth parents are. I love to hang out with friends, but there are two things I want to know. In here, why have I've been betrayed and when am I getting out? I'm confused and hurt.

-Spencer

From The Beat: The one thing we know is that you can reach the goals you have set for yourself, and that respect comes with reaching those goals. We don't know what led you here, but if you did the things you're charged with doing, then nobody but you betrayed yourself. (No one can snitch on you if you haven't done anything to be snitched on.) Being confused is all part of being human, especially at your age, so don't let confusion be a reason not to continue to achieve. If finding your birth parents is important to you, then we hope you achieve that too, but it's the life that springs from getting a good education — which you have set down as a goal — that makes all the rest possible. Thank you for this piece.

Filling In The Blanks

You wouldn't believe how many times I've heard, "You're a screw up, and always will be!" or you might have. Either way, the bottom line is I might be, but I won't always be one. I've had teachers tell me, "Give up! You're a failure." I've had my mom's ex-boyfriend tell me how bad of a jerk I was, on a daily basis. I've even had my mom tell me once how bad I've messed both her life and mine before.

But you know what? I don't care any more. I have done a lot of bad things in my life and I may have ruined it, but I'm going to change and prove everybody wrong. I will do something in my life and be somebody. I may be incarcerated for six to eight more months, but when I get released, things will change. I can do it and I will, so don't call me a failure, because it's not true.

-Kay-Gee

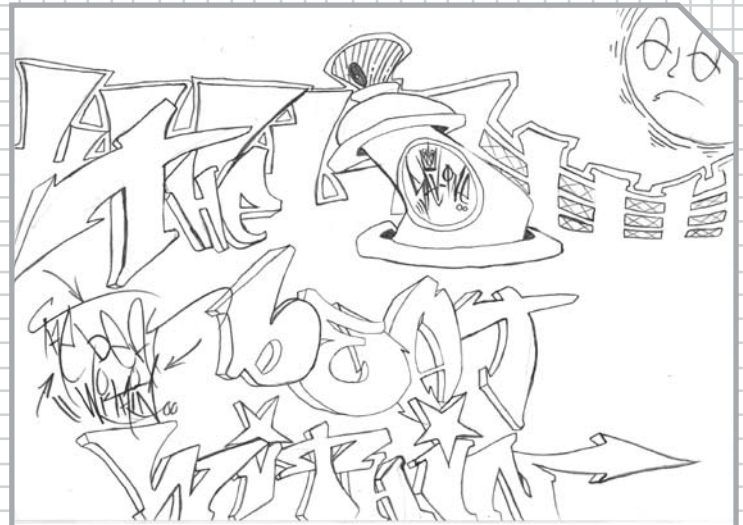
From The Beat: Just by writing this, you have shown that you are no failure. Change begins in the mind, and what you've written tells us that it is not something you have to wait for until you get out, because it's already happening. Adults (especially parents and teachers) who tell children that they will always be failures are, themselves, failing in their own responsibilities, so we greatly admire you for not crediting what they tell you. It is obvious that you have a good brain, and the determination to use it. Don't let the world define you. You have not ruined your life, but only made mistakes, as we all have. Follow through on your promise to continue to make the changes you know you need to make for a future you know you want to have.

I Regret Never Listening

There were many times when people tried to reach me and tried to keep me out of trouble, but for some odd reason I would never listen to them, even though I knew that what they were telling me was true and they were really trying to help me out. I am tired of coming in and out of jail, and it's moments like this where I regret not listening to those people who tried to help me. But, hey, people make mistakes and nobody is perfect, and hopefully this time I will learn from my mistakes.

-Wayo

From The Beat: Of course people — all people — make mistakes. But those mistakes don't have to define their entire lives, and we admire you for committing yourself not to let your mistakes define you and your future. We hope you think hard about why you never listened to those who had your best interests at heart, because unless you understand that, you may again fail to listen, even to yourself. "Hopefully" is not enough to keep you from making the same mistakes. Beyond hope, you have to make a plan, one step at a time. Without that, others will be deciding what that plan looks like, and you don't want that to happen.



Something Needs To Be Done

I believe everyone needs to change something. No one is perfect! For me, though, I believe a lot of things need to be done, like learning to make the right decision and be stronger when it comes to peer pressure.

Anyone can change, but it's up to that person to do it. Don't be held back from what you're capable of and take care of your problems now, before it's too late. Getting things "done" can mean a few things, like finishing your homework or saying no to drugs. But it's not that easy, as most of us know, so just look upon yourself and know you control your fate.

-Mejia

From The Beat: We agree with every word in this piece, Mejia. You're right, it's not easy to do the things you know are right, so you have to be careful with every step you take. But when you examine where you are, and what lies ahead without the changes you know you need to make, that's not easy, either. What is the most important help you could use to succeed in doing what you want? What are the obstacles in your way?

I'm Sorry

Mom, I am sorry
What I make you go through
All the lying
The behavior
The attitude
You deserve better
Now I'm locked up
An' all I do is think
Now I see from your eyes
You have done so much for me
And I'm thankful
Thank you
I love you

-Ruby

From The Beat: Of course, your mom will cry when she reads this poem (and you must show it to her). But they will be tears of happiness, and she deserves nothing less. Don't forget all that you've said when you walk out of here and are able to make your own decisions again.

Hopelessness Leads To Dropping Out

What makes kids drop out of school is sometimes the people that they hang out with in the streets. Sometimes people are more interested in getting money, girls, everything, instead of wasting their time at school, when they are already missing a lot of credits or feel like school is hopeless for them. Then, when you are trying to get money anyway, people get locked up and waste a lot of time in the hall, and then they really feel like it's hopeless, so maybe they will just work towards getting their GED or not.

Sure, people have plans on getting right back to the hustle on the streets, because maybe a year wasn't shhh for them. Also, people stop going to school because some people have a lot of problems with their family, girl, legal problems, and just want to stay on the streets. Also, people just get lost in drugs and alcohol and start getting into that and they might stay in school, but in the end they don't have enough credits to graduate, so they just drop out and keep doing drugs and get locked up.

For some people, being incarcerated helps them get back on track, but I know for a lot of us, if we spend too much time in and out, we just work on getting towards your GED. I haven't thought of dropping out yet, but if I keep coming in and out of here, I'm forced to get my GED instead of nothing. I'm trying to make this my last time coming in here and make my parents proud and graduate.

-Josue

From The Beat: Thank you, Josue, for taking this topic seriously and writing so well about it. It's obvious to us that you have taken your schooling seriously, too, because you are able to think and to express yourself well. What is the hardest thing for you about staying out? What would help you the most to truly make this the last time. Graduating from school is not just a way to make your parents proud (although it certainly will make them proud). It's also a way to make you proud of yourself, and to give yourself the best preparation you need for a successful future, and one lived in freedom.

Pain

In my little corner of the world
Violence and pain
In a crowd, yet lonely
Try to rise above
But held back by those who say they care
The past haunts me
But not my own choice
My honesty is bad
My lies are believed
I accept myself, my faults, my strengths
My weaknesses, my feelings
My achievements are overlooked
My failures glamorized
I know nothing
I'm not responsible
A disappointment is what I'm made to be
Loneliness is my best friend
Dreaming is my desire
My little corner of the world
Is priceless

-Rambo

From The Beat: When you avoid the kinds of gang references you know we can't put in The Beat, you are so, so good! There is so much in this poem that we wish we could sit with you for your explanation. Why do you "know nothing"? Why are you "not responsible"? What are your strengths and weaknesses, your failures and achievements? When we read a poem of this subtlety, all we want is more.

I Should Have Gone To School

One day I woke up and decided to stop going to school
I just wasn't feeling it any more; it just wasn't cool
I needed my sleep, my life, my friends
The ones who forgot about me towards the end
And now I'm staring at four white walls
Wondering how I'm gonna make it through all my falls
School just wasn't for me
Now I'm bored and lonely
Trying so hard to keep my head up
But life keeps crashing down; it's so tough
Shoulda gone to school that day
'Cause now I'm locked up and there's nothing else to say

-Pink

From The Beat: The only thing we can disagree with in this poem is your last line, "there's nothing else to say." Oh, yes, there is much more to say. It's one thing to regret the choice you made to quit school, but that isn't the end of it. That is a decision that can be turned around, and should be. You are young, but even old people who never finished school finds ways to go back and do it... if that's what they want to do. One difference between children and adults is that adults think about the future, not just the present, and that means they often have to do things they "aren't feeling" because they want something better to happen, something they are feeling. So don't just accept your choice, make new ones. Get your education; it's the key to a better future.

I did want to go to school, but at the middle of the year, it got boring, and I decided to cut class most of the time.

High School

Back in freshman year, I thought high school was going to be an interesting place to be. Most of the people that I know that have dropped out (including me) have most likely quit school because they don't care or it means nothing to them/me. All I would care about is money.

My junior year I got a job, and I was gettin' my money and buying whatever I want with it. So then, when my senior year came through, I did want to go to school, but at the middle of the year, it got boring, and I decided to cut class most of the time.

While I was cutting class, we used to go to the "spot," (Sequoia Station under Long's Drugs, to be exact.) We burned 8s most of the time and when lunch arrived, go back to class and just chill in class. Most of the time class would pass by fast when you're blasted. At 3:10 pm, get out of school and go and smoke some more grapes and eat pupusas in the Salvadorian taco truck. After eating, play some soccer and enjoy the rest of the night with another blunt. The day after, not go to school until brunch time (9:40 a.m.) After brunch, go smoke again and do the same thing over and over again.

That's my drop out story.

-Manny

From The Beat: This is a POW, not because we admire the way you approached your schooling, but because you've been very honest and taken the topic seriously. How do you think your approach to school might affect your future? Is it also possible that by not taking school seriously, you contributed to putting yourself here in the box? How will you deal with other things in life that are not to your liking or boring (a job, for example, which can be very boring), or other problems you might face? It seems to us that the problem is you were looking at school the way a child might — if I don't like it, I won't do it — without thinking of how it will affect you as an adult. You're writing is very mature, so we wonder if you've changed your view of dropping out. Do you plan to pursue your education when you're out? We sure hope so, because there is a world of knowledge to learn about, and you are capable of so much!

Sadistic Women

The only thing I can do is cry
 Because all of the joy and happiness has been drained
 from my body
 I feel as if no one understands
 I feel as if I should be dead
 It's not as if it would make a difference to anyone
 Just take me away
 Far away
 Somewhere
 So I can become what I am destined to be
 A nobody
 Let my place be given to someone who deserves it, who
 wants it
 I am in a dark place and it seems as if I am stuck
 Nothing, no one is in this dark place with me
 Leaving me alone in the dark fighting this battle and
 progressively
 Losing day after day sitting here missing your face
 Screaming deep down and crying in disgrace
 Wishing for you to be by my side
 Instead you run and look to hide
 The pressure we have to be the best
 Is causing our youth to be put to the test
 So look at me and see me cry
 Because I miss you and I'm not going to lie
 As I cut my wrist and watch my clothes stain
 It's just a reminder of all of my pain
 Teardrops across my face
 And at the same time I feel my heart race
 The blade slips away from my hand on to the floor
 Oh how I wish I was able to feel that just one more
 And it was bleeding on the bathroom floor
 That you decided not to take it anymore
 You looked down into my eyes
 And said you wouldn't save me next time
 You said you could not wait and see
 When I was a finally happy
 You said it was a waste of time and space
 So turn me into a different face
 So instead of staying, you just left
 And left my heart completely bereft
 There's nothing left for me to do
 But cut me everything in two
 So it's back to bleeding on the bathroom floor
 Where no one was able to save me once more
 Sucking out the last of life crying out to no one
 Can't someone hear me?
 Screaming out to anyone is there anyone out there?
 Can't see anything it's too dark to make out my
 surroundings
 Lost and alone this place is so cold
 Hands frozen and fingers stuck together
 Where am I? Why doesn't anyone come?
 Crying out for the last time
 I'm going out of my mind
 Screaming out to anyone
 And no one no one comes to free me from this cold darkness
 Why doesn't anyone come?
 I've got a confession to make
 Can't anybody hear me crying out these last tears?
 Screaming out these last words?
 Too late to cry out
 Too late to scream out much too late to wait for someone
 Anyone to save me from myself
 Just let me leave and not cut my throat in two
 So let me leave.

Richard "Lil' Man" Madrid III from California Correctional Institution
 in Tehachapi, CA, steps up this week with a number of powerful
 pieces to absorb.

Seven Time Loser

I'm a seven time loser.
 I come from an abusive dysfunctional family,
 which did drugs and alcohol.
 I was screwed up,
 in the hands of my father,
 who is a drug addict and a messed up alcoholic himself.
 I guess that's where all this madness and sin started
 by following my father's footsteps.
 Little did I know where it would take me,
 to loneliness, in prison.
 Depression, hatred,
 prejudice, and quick to blame anyone and everyone
 for my misfortune,
 I destroyed every relationship
 trying to do more drugs,
 women and sin I would get into.
 To try and fill the loneliness and emptiness I had inside,
 but that's before the grace of God that has come over
 and in me.
 For He got my attention.
 I'm in prison doing my time
 so depressed
 but screw it.
 That's life.
 Like my life now?



Heart of Stone

This heart of stone sure is missing you.
 Sure is wishing you were back where love belongs
 This heart of stone has not forgotten you
 But broke while trying to pretend that it was strong
 Memories have made its will to grow tired and weak
 Silently it turned from being bold to meek
 Till finally it gave in to a sad defeat
 Aching more and more with every fragile beat
 Loneliness has slowly stripped it of its pride
 Leaving just an empty heart here behind
 Without a hope of any way it could survive
 Stranded there alone and simply left to die

The Evil One

My name is Satan. I'm the father of lies. I come to rob steal and destroy. My desires are to rob you of your peace and to steal your joy, and my ultimate goal is to destroy your soul?

I'm the one that hated you from the very first day of your worthless life. I'm the one that's always with you when you think evil perverted and disgusting thoughts. I'm the one who encourages you to lie, steal, cheat, and display all that good anger, hate and jealousy.

Yes I'm the one who distracts you whenever you try to do the right things in life boy. Do I love it when you fail? Guess what, I'm the reason why you don't believe in God. I'm the one that strangles your faith and eradicates the spirit that tries to embed its self in you. I love to always reign supreme in your heart, soul and mind.

Matter of fact, I would love for you to kill someone real bad so we can sit in the hell fire together forever.

By the way, before I go, I want to remind you not to do anything good or serve anyone but me. Please don't let me catch you praising or serving God 'cause I will be very upset with you. Take care. I'll be watching for sure your friend.

If There Was A Way

I was just standing
 Alone in this room
 Surrounded by memories
 We stopped making to soon
 I was just standing
 Alone in this room
 I was just thinking
 All to myself
 How I still want you
 And nobody else
 I was just thinking
 All to myself
 In this darkness I move slowly
 Always struggling to be free
 But I still hear your voice
 And everywhere I see the choice
 That's made such a fool of me
 I was just wondering
 It there was a way
 To bring you back to me
 Maybe things I could say
 I was just wondering
 If there was a way?

MIKHAIL MARKHASEV

Another's Pain No One Can Know

Or walk within another's sorrow
 The One who made the heart will show
 How to sustain it till tomorrow.

The soul is an abyss of deep,
 A world unknown, but it's our choice:
 To weep with those who mourn and weep,
 To joy with those who do rejoice.

One of the striking features of The Beat Within (at least for me) is the raw quality of some of the workshop entries. They are murderous. Forgive me, I don't even know if there is such descriptive term, but if there is - it's appropriate to describe some of what I've read in the juvenile section. Without oversimplifying it, much of what those young people experience in their daily lives is absurd, and should not even be placed upon adults.

I'm not talking about the other crap that I myself used to do in juvy about a dozen years ago. I'm aiming at what is behind it: the broken people, coming from broken communities, growing up in broken families, trying to forge an existence. The sum of which typically results in more brokenness. The abuse, the neglect (which is simply another form of abuse), the dope, the game, the streets, the lack of direction - all of these are contributing factors. I don't know. Maybe prison has detached me from reality, and has made me soft...

I write this as an Orthodox Christian, as someone who is convinced that God is love and His essence is indescribable goodness. And that this world is governed by God.

Alright, so where, then, does the previous paragraph fit in this goodness theology? Good question, and unfortunately I'm unqualified to answer it. But, I will borrow something out of monastic literature, from St. Anthony of Egypt.

When the same Abba Anthony thought about the depth

It's an incredible honor to have Mikhail Markhasev back in the pages of The Beat Within. This thoughtful writer's insights are priceless and a true blessing. He is writing us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Those of you following this veteran's weekly pieces know he has been dropping some pretty deep pieces for us all to read. Pay attention to every word because you might miss something.

of the judgments of God, he asked, "Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme age? Why are those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do the wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?" He hear the voice answering him, "Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not your advantage to know anything about them." Well, in that case, may God help me know what is "to my advantage", and not concern myself with what is too high for me.

One of the "injustices" in the world is the fact that I'm alive, while better men are dead? Can I say anything against God? No, I'm alive only because God is good, and I'm given another day to repent, to make sure that my future doesn't repeat my past. My repentance is a gift - a part of growing up, and becoming in prison what I've failed to be in the real world. That in itself is a gift of mercy.

More about that next time...

Life's a meat grinder of a kind,
 Shredding through every fiber and bone
 All of humanity squeezed the grind
 Together we come, but endure it alone.
 There's pressure enough to implode the soul.
 Jammed into darkness but that's not the goal
 Forced to proceed with no exit in sight,
 Pushed from behind toward invisible light
 Mangled and mashed, beset from each side
 Striving and swimming, unable to hide
 Violently slammed but in this we confide:
 Uncrushed and unmoved in God's hope we abide.

Life Goes On

I've been hit with a struggle
 Ripped from my family
 Pushed to the edge
 I shook hands with insanity
 But I'll be all right, though
 'Cause you taught me how
 So keep your head up for me, Homie
 And never look down
 Because still through it all
 Happiness will prevail
 I'll have some battle wounds
 But I'm gonna live to tell the tale
 Life goes on, Homie
 But only if you let it
 Guilt is for the weak
 So live free and don't regret it
 Every dog has his day
 So become a man and have a lifetime
 Get your mind right, fly right
 And let your light shine
 Never give up hope
 And know that nothing ever comes
 free
 But never feel powerless
 Because, Homie, you're a young king
 With so much to live for
 So much to lose
 So step back fro the past
 And snap back to the real you
 It's important to know
 That mistakes will be made
 But you've gotta learn from them
 Let 'em be motivation to change

When we consider the gifts this writer of barely 21 years already possesses — gifts of intelligence and grace and humor and love — we can only imagine how much he will teach us as he grows. Michael Cabral is one of those "natural-born" writers who can say the most profound things in the simplest ways. The two pieces that follow are "old" pieces to him. He wrote the poem, "Life Goes On" when he was still in juvenile hall, already recognizing that change starts from the individual, and that it is a process, not simply a statement. The longer piece, "Road To Freedom" is a parable (like those that Jesus told) that was meant to answer a friend's question, "What's prison like." After reading it, the friend wrote back, "I don't get it." We hope you do. Your life may depend on it. Michael shares his brilliance with us from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison.

I know evil ways
 Aren't erased in a sentence
 But it's time to break the cycle
 Step up and make a difference
 You're the future of the world
 So let the past be the past
 Be strong move on
 Live long, but not fast
 There's not enough time
 In this life to waste
 So hurry up and be yourself
 'Cause you're one of the greats
 You've got the key to joy
 Right in front of your face
 And when you stop to realize it
 There's no more running away
 There's no more problems to create
 All the drama is useless
 Once you open up your eyes
 There's no more need for excuses
 'Cause things happen to us all
 It's how you react to it
 That'll set you apart
 From either pain or happiness
 And never live to impress
 Be the best because of love
 If fake friends is what you need

The world will never be enough
 And learn to forgive
 Accept your neighbor for who he is
 'Cause one day you'll need a friend
 And he'll be yours if you be his
 Remember where you're from
 It can't become a mystery
 Let the past be the past
 But take pride in your history
 Because knowing who you are
 And you have been through the
 centuries
 Is sometimes enough
 To get you through the pain and
 misery
 Be thankful for your memories
 But life goes on
 Hold fast to your morals
 Know right from wrong
 And every time you think you can't fly
 Just breathe
 'Cause everything's gonna be all right
 You'll see
 That life goes on, Homie
 Yes, it does
 And know that no one can ever
 Take our pride from us

Road To Freedom

Michael is sitting on the middle cushion of his mama's couch, directly in front of the TV, watching nothing he feels is particularly good. He isn't really paying at any attention anyway. He woke up this morning the best mood he has been in for quite some time, and that's all his mind is wrapped up in right now.

Occasionally, he considers what to do today, what might fit his unexplainable joy and the broad smile he just can't get rid of. (Not the he intends to explain or get rid of any part of this moment.) He thinks about his friends and who he should call to share today with. Also, he thinks about his family and how lucky he is to have such an amazing one.

"Mom!" Michael calls out during "a few short messages." He wants to ask his mom if she is going to be busy today, because he's decided that she is the perfect person to share a good day with. "I know you hear me, Mom," he says in mock-seriousness. She doesn't answer him, so he walks from the living room to the kitchen where he thinks she is, but she isn't. Michael's mom isn't in her bedroom or in the garage, either. In this garage, though, he notices that his mom's car is gone, too. So he assumes that she just went to the store real quick, that she'll be right back.

Still smiling, Michael — comfortable with it because he is alone — begins to scream (he calls it singing) the few words he remembers from a good song he heard the other day. It makes him laugh at himself.

He is walking back to the living room to continue

watching whatever it is he was watching, hoping his mom gets home soon so they can hang out together. They haven't done that in a while. Almost to the living room, he passes the telephone on the kitchen counter just as it begins to ring.

"Talk to me, caller," he answers the phone, the smile heavy in his voice.

The voice on the opposite end of the line was heart-attack serious, though. "Is this Michael?"

"Yes, it is." The seriousness in the called voice somewhat confused Michael. It almost sounded too serious. This has to be one of his friends about to pay a pointless prank, he thinks. Then, just as he is about to ask the caller for his name, the caller speaks again.

Urgently he said, "Someone you love has been in a terrible accident. That person is at Freedom Hospital," and with that the caller hung up.

"Someone I love?!... Accident?!... What the hell!" Michael's thoughts are racing. Is it his mom? One of his brothers? Or his sister? Are his friends okay? Is this even true?

Michael's good day and good mood aren't good any more. His smile is gone. He is confused and he is scared. But he is determined to get to Freedom Hospital, to find out whether everything is all right or is gonna be all right. Who is hurt? What the hell is happening?

Panicking, Michael grabs his keys, runs out the door of his home, and gets into his car. He speeds away. Moving faster than he's ever gone before (and too scared to slow

continued from previous page

down), he is running stop signs, ignoring oncoming traffic, and he isn't even wearing a seatbelt. All that is on his mind is getting to Freedom.

After about four miles, he grows angry because he has, at this point, already passed more hospitals than he ever knew there were. Why is it taking so long to get to the one he needed to be at? Michael's mind is racing again. Is somebody dying? Dead? In pain? Was "terrible accident" an exaggeration? Is everything at the hospital okay?

Then he sees his mom's car parked on the side of the road. His mom is leaning against the car, almost looking as if she has been waiting for him to pass by. She smiles and waves and blows kisses as soon as she sees her son. This makes Michael feel better. It even brings him back to reality long enough for him to realize just how fast and reckless

he is driving.

But this realization makes him panic again. He is beginning to cry, wondering to himself if it is too late to slow down. Deciding that yes, it is, he then wonders if he's even going to make it to the hospital. Will he crash along the way? Will he take a wrong turn and never find Freedom Hospital?

"I have to get there, I have to get there, I have to get there," he is repeating over and over in his mind. "Everything is going to be okay," he tries to comfort himself. "But what if it isn't?"

He looks as far ahead up the road as he can, but sees nothing... or, at least, nothing familiar. Where the hell is this damn Freedom?"

Hopefully, for his sake, he hasn't already passed it by.



GREGGORY SLEETH

Greggory Sleeth is writing us from a correctional facility in San Diego, Ca and wants to share a quick reminder with all you readers out there.

Remember

Forget each kindness that you do
 As soon as you have done it.

Forget the praise that falls to you
 The moment you have won it.
 Forget the slander that you hear
 Before you can repeat it.

Forget each slight, each spite,
 Each sneer, where ever you may
 Meet it.

Remember every kindness done
 To you, what ever its measure.

Remember praise by others won
 And pass it on with pleasure
 Remember every promise made
 And keep it to the letter.

Remember those who lend you
 Aid and be a grateful debtor.

Remember all the happiness
 That comes your way in living
 Forget each worry and distress.

Be hopeful and forgiving
 Remember good, remember
 Truth, remember Heaven's above
 You.

MICHAEL MCKINNEY

Michael McKinney is writing us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fla. Michael has been dropping nothing but game for all us readers for awhile now. He's an intelligent writer that is not afraid to put his feelings down for all you readers out there to know what his life, shoot, what prison is like. Listen to this man you might learn something. See where he's coming from.

Trapped in a Hole

My life is trapped in a prison hole
 But I will not fold

I been kept in this prison hell hole for a great number of
 years

More years then I can count on my hands

With both hands put together

I have become to be somewhat clever

Quick to learn and apply my ideas

This is what helps me survive

This hole I have been trapped in for so many years at a
 time

While being in the hole, many times the system have
 tried

To push me to that breaking point hoping to lose my
 mind

But my inner strength kept me hanging on strong

My inner strength kept me from letting this system
 break me Into selling my soul

That's something that was never going to happen

'Cause I will keep up my struggle until I grow old

But only the wise way

God is the only one I will allow

To have full control over my soul

God's word was my source of hope in this mad and bad
 hold

I have been trapped in, and in this hole,
 I have heard there are times to bend but just don't break

I took that saying as one would have to be flexible in a
 situation like this 'cause in the hellhole of prison

In prison every circumstance conspires to make a
 prisoner lose His hold, so he won't have any control
 But in this hole I still have the freedom and ability to
 choose What my attitude would be like in a given set of
 circumstance.

Beauty

The most beautiful thing in this world I have known
 I've watched it blossom like a rose than turn to stone
 I've smelled it, held it, breathed in its sweet scent
 I've laid beside it for hours s I lay content
 I've wished for it to love me as I've loved it so
 I've longed for the beauty as I've watched the beauty
 grow
 I have tasted every part of this beauty oh what a sweet
 taste
 Lips to lips, face to face, in each other's embrace
 I've been apart from that beauty, how I long for that day
 to come
 When all the miles between us will simply turn to none

Our Love

Your beauty shines like the stars in a clear night sky
 Our love is honest, its truth, it does not lie
 You're always there whether we're near or far
 That's why I love you for all that you are
 Our love is like reality it does not bend
 For that its great, our love will never end
 Our love will last longer than time and space
 For that our love cannot be replaced
 If I shall ever question our love
 I shall be denied from the heavens above
 To burn forever in the fiery flame
 For all eternity our love shall try to reclaim

Afraid to Ask

As I sit in my cell and anticipate the day of my release
 I wonder where I would go if my breath would cease
 Where would I go if my life would come to an end?
 Will I fall to the smoldering pits or to heaven will I
 ascend
 As I sit behind these walls I ask questions that's
 unknown to man
 On the yard I smile and live like my life is grand
 Some are scared to die I welcome death with a simple
 smile
 Most don't care where they go till they've walked that
 last inch or mile
 My life has been on a downward spiral now it's almost
 up in smoke
 On the words I've dreaded to speak will I fall and choke
 Will I ask for forgiven when death is finally at my door
 Or will I cast all aside and simply be a boor.

Vow

This I vow to you heaven and earth combine
 Our mind body and soul our hearts intertwine
 This I vow to you I will never leave
 A perfect life for us, this I will achieve
 This I vow to you when I say I do
 Our love will be forever just me and you
 This I vow to you in my hour of death
 I would of gave you all my love
 In me there's nothing left
 This I vow to you when I reach the
 Heaven above the throne beside my God I'll
 Wait for the one I love.

Robert Dixon is no stranger to The Beat Within, as many of you readers have seen his work in past issues. Robert is currently locked in South Central Correctional Center in Missouri. He has a few poems to share with everyone and his work really shows you his thoughts and insights on life itself behind these prison walls.

Wonder

I wonder what it's like to be a good father
 I wonder what it's like to be there for my daughter
 I wonder what it's like to watch my daughter grow
 I wonder what it's like to play with her in the snow
 I wonder what it's like to watch my daughter pray
 I wonder what it's like to see her on Christmas day
 I wonder what it's like to hear her say dad wake up
 I wonder what it's like to see her put on make-up
 I wonder what it's like to tuck her on at night
 I wonder what it's like to sing her Silent Night
 I wonder what it's like to drop her off at school
 I wonder what it's like to hear her say dad you're so cool
 One day these wonders will turn to stone
 These wonders will disappear as soon as I go home

*As I sit in my cell and antici-
 pate the day of my release
 I wonder where I would go if my
 breath would cease
 Where would I go if my life
 would come to an end?*

Prison Life At Seventeen

I came to prison at seventeen
 Scared and depressed
 I tried to look mean
 Then I found the man who made me happy throughout
 the day
 I would pick up a bible to hear what He had to say
 He told me not to sin, to live like this day was my last
 Look to the future instead of the past
 He said ever time you feel like you are going to sin
 Pick up the bible and pick up a pen
 Write down the things you see and feel
 Soon enough they will be real
 In prison I see men weak and small
 Strong and tall then I wonder their downfall
 So I tell them of you and what you've been through
 I tell them to come to church with me on Sunday
 Some come and stay
 So now I'm on my knees and this is what I pray
 Forgive them lord for they do not know
 The love you have share and show
 I pray that they find you before it's too late
 I pray that you fill their hearts with love and take out the
 hate
 I pray they will look down deep within and find you oh
 Lord
 Please forgive them. Amen.

My Last Letter To The Beat

It has been 10 years since I knew of this publication and it has been an honor and a privilege to know you all. In a huge way my printed expressions have helped me grow and see who I am, and you all have helped me grow and see who I am and you all have helped me become a man just by your support and free publication. For that I am in great debt for your time.

So as to this missive it will be my last, so that another may take it's place. As all things come and go, so must I follow the order of unbreakable occurrence. I am at great peace now that God has pulled me out of my darkness and I see more clearly than at any other time in my short existence. So as to what I could write to awaken another... well it has all been said from all who write you. All the expressions of all the emotions from all who search for where they belong have built a path to the truth.

Each poem is a brick in the path to what we all truly seek. Life, ... and not just life, but life to it's fullest, life with love, truth, justice, dignity, forgiveness and compassion. These true virtues of who we are, are the highest we can achieve. Love being the strongest. I believe it is Christ that has given me these and I would not be doing my duty if I did not tell you so. Such a skeptic I was, but I see that skepticism is nothing, nothing but foolish pride. Each new person is condemned to live our lives but they do have

Jeremy Towner is writing us from Corcoran California. Jeremy has been a writer for The Beat Within since it damn near started, when he was a youngster fighting for his life in Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall. He's been blessing us with his powerful pieces for a long time now. But we're going to let him speak his piece and where he stands, we do hope he reconsiders and continues to bless his friends here at The Beat with his wisdom. We hate losing writers and friends. The Beat prides itself in relationships, so to read the following piece saddens us.

freewill to change their choice on which life to follow. Sometimes we copy many ways to live from many lives and hope we do it right. For me there is only one true life to live. That is the life of Christ.

So I cannot say what way to go in life, only Christ can. And if all want a normal life then they will listen, learn, and fight uphill. Remember, we have all fallen and that was easy. It's rising back up that is the true test of who we are. There are others around us who have fallen and they will try to drag you back down again and again. Leave them to their darkness and seek the light of truth and the true Kingdom of Heaven. Life is a test of endurance but it is nothing more than we can handle for we are the creation of life's expression. We are the elements of the world but our souls are the very breath of divine life, keep seeking and you will find what has been within you since your first breath in this world.

Keep fighting, keep expressing, keep growing.

We never grow smaller, only bigger.

SHERMAN D. MANNING

Blue-Eyed Blonde Book Two

The loud, obstreperous lonely, unmarried, dysfunctional and ridiculous miscreant.

On 5/21/07 at 4:15 pm, N walked into my room (unauthorized and against the rules because he had a gun strapped to him) and took off his dark, Ray Charles sunglasses and proceeded to verbally harass, taunt, tease and insult me. I'm glad he had the audacity to (finally) pull off his dark shades (if but for a moment) because when I look into your eyes I see you. Everything I need to know about you is revealed to me in those (eyes) windows to the soul.

I saw why he keeps them on. A. He has some kind of nervous tick, which causes him to blink his eyes a thousand times a minute. This kind of eye battling is very common to tweakers and speed freaks. Does N use speed? I have absolutely no evidence that he does. But looking at his eyes, as well as viewing his constant jitteriness, etc., it could be concluded that he may be a crystal meth abuser. His eyes were dancing around in REM (Rapid Eye Movement) like someone spinning on a speed trip. His visit to my room was provoked by the fact that he had heard that hospital staff has been giving newspapers to read. And in his demented, biased, un-Christian and corrupted opinion no inmate should be able to read a newspaper.

Instead we should sit idly and perhaps listen to his embellished and fictitious talk of imaginary happenings. He also reinforced the fact that his "Boy" T was gonna silence me when I get back to Yard-A. N should never (as well as CO M and Sgt. N) be allowed to work in a hospital. They have vicious spirits, assaultive minds and the personal philosophy of hatred. And maybe all that has happened to me was to bring me here. Maybe the universe brought a Georgia boy like me to take on these ignorant, criminal and corrupted officers in CDC.

Perhaps God got tired of spiritual wickedness in high place. And God had your boy (this writer) in training or in boot camp in Atlanta. God prepared me via my close personal association with the late great Rev. Hosea Williams. And all that "Doc" (Rev Williams) learned from his close association

Author, Sherman D. Manning is writing to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. He is sharing with us an episode of the daily life he faces of being in prison. We appreciate Sherman taking the time out to share a part of him, given the many books he is writing/has written. The following piece speaks volumes, and for our own protection, given we do not know when this piece took place, have simply changed the names of the correction officers to their initials.

with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was to rub off on me. I learned passion, toughness, courage, dignity, leadership, and hot to fight (politically) from Rev. Williams. It boggles my mind to learn how many people (outside of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, Alabama, and a handful of other southern states) don't know who Rev. William's was! Hosea Williams was a Civil Rights Legend! Chief Field General for Dr. King's S.C.L.C. and Rev. Williams holds the national record for going to jail (for civil rights) more than any other civil rights leader living or dead!

I also learned a ton of lessons from my close association with Ambassador/Mayor Andre Young! And I think that all that I learned from James, Dollie, Brenda, Rev. Moses Lee Raglin, Rev. Hosea Williams, Andy Young, Uncle Melvin Jackson, Big Momma (great grandma Clara Clarkson), Big Daddy (Grady Jackson-great granddaddy) etc., etc., and what I learned from so many others in Atlanta, Virginia, Washington D.C., New York, Los Angeles, Tennessee, etc., etc. All these lessons were (indeed) preparation for the battles, which I now face. I could never have sustained and maintained throughout this storm of a wrongful conviction, the loneliness of incarceration and the violent attacks upon me by the Ts, Ns, Ms, Sgt. Ns, Bs, the Bs or some of theses others.

I could have learned what I've learned in any book, course or class. I had to go through this just certainly as Joseph had to go through that. I had to come upon this storm just as Job had to come upon that storm.

There will be changes! You can rest assured that some things (in CDC) will never, ever be the same because I was here. I'm not just here for me. But I must represent! I'm representing Rev. Hosea Williams, Ambassador Andrew Young and in a sense I represent Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman as well as Joseph in Genesis. I've been bought with a price.

Ones Thoughts On Life

I walk into a familiar place in time that takes me back my childhood, but trapped in a world of confusion and taking a step into the future and everything is changing. Stepping back I examine the world that we live in, seeing what's going on, I wonder why we sometimes act the way we do, so trying to find my way around and trapped with no way out everything starts to become clear.

Everyday in a world of madness one tries to maintain and keep focus on everyday task. Trying to maintain what life they have, if one at all.

We walk around in our own world and we may tend to look at the next and wonder what's going on in their lives, or wondering about their world their living in, like if ours wasn't enough to deal with.

We probably wonder about what problems they may face everyday. Are what their dreams may be, or what goals they are trying to achieve. What is one to say what they'll do next when they get to the end of them goals, only to find themselves standing blank and not knowing what to do next because they completed what they were after. It wouldn't hurt to just take it one day at a time.

When we tend to worry about other's lives, we tend to worry about what kind of job they may have, or do they drive a nice car, but keeps us only guessing. We wonder what kind of house they may live in or if they even have a house to even live in.

When we see a homeless person on the street and seeing their nature, we are quick to judge them and tend to try and get far away from them like if they had a contagious disease or something. When really we should really be wondering what got them there, or what major even took place in their lives that ruined everything they once had.

Maybe we should examine our own lives and be thankful for what we do have and for what we don't. Maybe we should just be thankful for God allowing us to even have life at all. We should always help others, because in the same sense like wise will need the same help someday. We should never be quick to judge anyone, for there's enough of that in the world already and one should enjoy the simpler things of life and let God do the judging.

Have you ever stopped to think about looking into ones eyes and just to see the pain or hurt that may be there in their lives? If you did you might be hurt by the sight of it. Looking into that confusion of a world that is long dead and gone. then and only then would it get you think about your own life and how good your life really is.

Looking into the windows of the soul in front of you and wondering what makes that person tick are what might keep them going in their everyday lives. It only makes you wonder, huh?

Sometimes we alt to kneel down to ones level and ask, "Are you ok?", "Do you need help?", or "How may I help you?".

Or have you ever looked at the next and always wonder how can you step your foot into that person's life, to see what changes may take place?

Have you ever stopped to think how we got here, or is life on earth like a world inside a computer, just made up and your just dreaming, and when and if you do ever wake up, you realize that the real world you woke up in, is really nothing like the one you dreamed about at all....

It's your thoughts "what do you see in your world?"

Jerry Graham II aka Mouse is writing us from a Correctional Facility in Snyder, Texas. His writing is really deep and has a lot to do with life in general. Jerry is trying to get a very important message across with us readers of The Beat Within. We can't be dwelling on our past as we try to start a bright new future. Listen to what this man has to say!

*the things we want to work out
 don't always work out and they
 take a turn for the worse...*

Two People-One Journey

As we all know at some point in our lives, in many relationships we have to move on toward new relationships, fixing broken hearts and healing are old pain. So much time goes by and we tend to forget the dreams we once had.

When we have to put down that old life and pick up the new one that's waiting for us. We wonder where it's gonna go or who its gonna involve. Our new dreams then set into a new beginning and the old are blown out with the wind, washed away never to be seen, or remembered again.

Times are forgotten as the new life comes into play. New photos start to surface and the old get thrown away, as of never to remember the old past, as if it didn't happen. So this was how are life began...

These two lives that were suppose to be the one. Were put to the side as of never to have even existed the way they were suppose to have. They fell in love with not a care in the world, lost in one another's eyes and captivated between the two with sparkles drawing out the color that makes up the beauty that holds fast around one's pupil. The long gazing into two totally different worlds, tell the story of passion and the long journey's that ones been through to get to where they are now.

Never understanding what their purpose was in life, but now finding it to be sitting right in front of them. As both thoughts spun out of control, they see that life is not starting to make sense and everything is starting to come together to complete a world that once seemed so big to one is now really just small now that two occupied it.

As we go on in our new lives for some reason the things we want to work out don't always work out and they take a turn for the worse. Tragedy sets in and the two world's that were just starting to make sense are now starting to fall apart and not understanding what's going on in a state of confusion, their lives begin to fall apart and hurt and pain begins to set in. Then setting into a cold and darkened world where it's lonely and only felled with tears and misery, the remains of memories are all that makes the pain harder to bare.

Then not wanting to accept the world that loneliness has to bring, they both set out in different directions in hope to find new lives, hoping to find happiness. Once again, but not realizing they are just repeating an on going cycle that just goes on from one person to the next.

So as they move on in their lives, their existence of a relationship no longer is to be remembered, but only the memories lurk in the back on ones mind.

"What's your Journey?"

Secondary Citizens

For a country founded on creating freedom and equality our government seems to spend an inordinate amount of time profiling people. During a campaign season, you, my fellow citizens, are a 'demographic'. To our governments' financial gurus, you are part of an 'economic class'. Why are U.S. citizens, living in the land 'the land of the free' so neatly compartmentalized? In actuality it is an exercise in control, to separate the primary citizens from the secondary citizens, or the 'sheep from the herders'. When restricting laws are enacted to tighten control, they are manifested under the guise of public safety. You are not excluded! If the effect of secondary citizenship hasn't been felt yet, your turn is coming...

Florida's government is rapidly approaching the status of the 'Gestapo'. Florida is becoming a 'police state'. There are over 120 prisons in Florida (average-2 per county) in operation. County jails are overflowing with people waiting to take their turn as wards of the state. Many cities in Florida are given the dubious distinction of some of the highest crime rates in America. This is largely based on prisoners being released and then re-entering the prison system once again.

Why is recidivism so high? Why are communities not getting any safer even with all its 'Gestapo' tactics? Florida is a 'for life' state. Make one mistake and Florida will condemn you for life! There is an old Florida saying: "Florida, come on vacation; leave on probation; return on violation". Sadly, for thousands of people, this is true.

When convicted of a crime in Florida, you are monitored for life. Felons must register as a criminal in any country they live in, and re-register if they move within state. You are subject to possible unwarranted harassment as long as you are a Florida resident. Justice having been meted out, those released from prison, having paid their debt to society, should be allowed to mainstream back into that society.

How do we go from a 'reactive society' to a 'proactive' one? Creating more fruitless laws is a pure reactive measure. If we don't address the root of the problem when we are merely putting a band-aid on an infection. The best example is drug addiction. This is really a medical crisis leading to criminal activity. 'Get tough' laws proven not to work. Mandatory counseling and rehabilitation would go much, much further to curtail substance abuse and subsequent crime.

There are hundreds of ways of improving the rate of recidivism, and I am sure my thoughts are not an inspiration of any unique wisdom. But when a judge boasts of having a goal of issuing 1 million years of prison time during his term in office, (as in Duval County) what does that lead to you believe? A judge is supposed to be fair and impartial. If a goal like this is set, then they are obviously biased and agenda-driven and show total disrespect for the law and their elected position.

We, the secondary citizens, put these people into office because we are manipulated by fancy slogans and fear. That is their power over us and that is what makes our citizens 'sheep'. In Florida the prison system is a major source of revenue and employment. It is a cash cow pure and simple. There is no money in prison reform but it actually would cost less to rehabilitate than to incarcerate. The government postulates about rehabilitation but, as usual, it is caught up in its own bureaucratic inability to function decisively.

Lives are destroyed, families are separated, and children psychologically damaged, unnecessary new crimes committed with needless victims, premature deaths, growing addictions, and endless suffering is the future of convicts and their families. Could these horrors also be good business and revenue for government?

It is ironic that government officials claim they are making communities safer, and yet at the end of their ineffective day, they retreat to their guarded, gated havens, away from the very citizenry they promised to serve and protect. For every nobleman (or politician) there is a need for peasants (secondary citizens). This is a historical reality and no one in the mainstream is exempt from unwarranted stigmatization.

Re-establishing a community bond is necessary. Fairness and decency, while not the norm any longer, are vital for a community to exist. Don't expect elected officials to do the right things as they have their own agendas, and have probably risen to their own level of incompetence. Officials secretly laugh at us because, as a whole, we are so easily 'herded' and fear is their weapon of choice. Majority rules, but through devious manipulation we are cut from the herd and feel isolated and helpless.

It is past time to join together and rise above our feelings of inadequacy and work together for the good of your family, your neighbors, to embrace the principles of freedom and equality that your country was founded on. It is not up to me, it is not up to you, it is up to us all...

Jeffrey S. Morales Mayo is incarcerated in Correctional Institution in Mayo, Florida. Jeffrey is a part of string of excellent writers that come from Florida. He shares his thoughts on life, politics, and gives good advice about trying to move ahead once we hit the bump on the road of life!

Bump in the Road

To begin our journey in life we must first get on the highway that leads us to our future. In the beginning, the future looks good. As we start on our journey we are sent on our way with a full tank of gas, (and for the more fortunate, a bag of chips and a cold drink).

As we begin our travels to 'Destination Unknown' we will have to make many decisions along the way. Jimmy Buffet says, "I may not know where I am going, but I'll know it when I get there". TRUE FACT: Most people do not know what they want to be when they grow up. Some people even spend their lives stuck on deciding whether to grow up. Some people even spend their lives stuck on deciding whether to grow up or NOT! (I admit I tackled this question longer than most.)

Some of us start out with a great deal of challenges that make it difficult to look past the present and see the future ahead. No matter where your starting point is in life, remember: Ride on...

On our highway of life we will come across exits to get on and off of. Each exit represents a decision, some good and some not so well. The longer we drive on life's highway, we can start to see the difference (if we choose to) between the good and no so good exits. Sometimes, in life, we choose a bad exit. This decision can put us on an extended detour (like prison) leaving us to lose some ground until we find our highway again. The fact is that when a detour ends you have to be prepared to ride on. O.K., so what if your past has more not so good exits than good ones? Is avoiding choosing an exit in the future the answer? "Even when you choose not to choose you still have made a choice." (Lyrics by Rush) in life you have to learn to "take the good with the bad". (Yeah, yeah, it's true; life is an adventure, if and only if you open your mind to it! You can even learn from the not so good decisions.

Most times when we look back on the 'not so good' times we can feel good about ourselves because we survived it and moved forward. That means you're riding on... So NOT choosing NOT an option. (And yes, that means you are still making a choice.) I am personally excited about the future and the road in front of me. While on the highway of life I have chosen not so good exits, I still try to walk away with something learned from it. I try to think of the things that lay ahead, like the birth of a child; or birthdays, wife's (only one at a time); new cars, travel, better jobs, business ventures, houses, and \$50.00 scratch-off ticket winners. The list goes on...

Somewhere on the highway of life is the exit that will lead me to the 20 lb. bass everyone catches but me. (If you know the exit, don't tell me.)

One final thought: "What about the bumps in the road?" These are things you don't control and can screw up a good road trip. I was recently running down life's highway (actually I was on a detour, looking for it), when 'WHAM!' I get a flat. I can grumble about it but it doesn't want to be flat either. AHH-HA! How about whatever made my tire go flat? Yes, I can do that. However, the true answer is still "No". So who or what do I get mad at? The answer is "Nothing". In order to move on, you need to fix the flat. Any energy used other than the task at hand is wasted energy. Simply get past the flat as best you can ride on... When you do, later down the road you can look back and feel proud you overcame it. Learn from the exits, detours and bumps in the road and look forward to finding the next 'good exit', like perhaps an exit with a discount tire store... Ride on...

The Battle In Life

When you and I came into this cold hearted world, we were all baby's not knowing the right from wrong. We did not know about the battle that was in front of us. We didn't know what to expect, because we were all too young to understand the concept of life. We were too young to understand the battle in life and what the meaning to life is. But little did we know it's a process as our life went along to conform to this battle to adapt.

Now us being kids and learning to battle with life we all had to learn on how to crawl before we walk and walk before we talk. We learn from consideration of our parents so being a newborn baby we cry out for help in the battle. We cry because we need to be feed some of us have been breast fed and some battle fed from our own mother. It's just a part of a natural life for some of us you know our mom can leave us somewhere some place for a second or a minute.

We cry because we sense she is going, because of the fear we have that we might be left behind. The battle that we need to be fully succeeded by our own mom touch of her and the comfort of her love to guide us to the light of life. To teach us what is right from wrong which leaves us in to phase of life. Now some of us had to find a way to have this battle in life. Some of us are rich and some of us are poor, but no matter what race you are, you are always the underdog to this battle.

In life, as we all know we went to some type of school to learn something and what we wanted to be. So being a kid or kids we all set goals and wanted to achieve them and most of us took a wrong direction to life not knowing what to expect of the damage that we did to ourselves. Most people as kids always wanted to be a doctor or lawyer or a policeman but in the long run a person who gets high, breaks the law, like being a car Junker or a dope dealer or a hooker and just on the street.

That's even a battle in life to and why we are not thinking straight in our own head. We can't think to be safe. We're just careless and looking for a reason to get caught up in society today, to put fast money in our pocket. But little did we know its always a price to pay not knowing the severity of the repercussions to our life. Some of us will get a grip on life.

In life's terms some will live a fast life and some will go slow and some are aware of the concept to life. It could be very short. It's very rare you see people live up to 100 years old. Now please take heed to the battle of life because they come in many shop and forms that you recognized the battle of life because our life is so precious that we take a lot for granted.

Have you ever thought that your life would be a battle because someone or someplace or even loved ones. Could it be a misunderstanding and not knowing who could be at fault when trying to explain that your right and knowing, which doesn't make you bad person but it dose make you your own worst enemy because it's a battle within yourself. Not knowing what to expect next in your life such sitting

Gregory Valdez is writing us from a correctional facility in Sacramento, Ca. In these two powerful pieces Greg explains the battles we all face. He talks about the battle that's in our mind to constantly to the right thing. He also talks about the battle in life. We all have been through our fair share of battles in life. And if we want to view that way, life itself is a constant battle in which we try to be the winners of the contest!

down with a person trying to explain something but not really knowing how to go about it because it's too difficult to say what you want to say or what you mean.

The battle of trying not to listen to good advice because in our own head we think we know it all and the reality we don't see now we just made a small thing into a big thing. Now the key to our life is wisdom and the concept of it is if we do not understand it there we lose the battle because of our own selfish acts or not trying to seek the good advice. Now I always hear if and when people are locked up I will change if society just gives me another chance I'll be that productive member of society.

But lil' did we know we already permitted our thought and do difference because of our selfish ways and fail to realize the battle is right there any give time. Because it's too good to fight the temptation. And the battle of life will always slap us in the face unless we achieve any and all obstacles that come our way. So what you lose is what you give to me.

The #1 battle is education to be installed in our brain. It should be like a sponge and soak it all up because in education there are lots of benefits. Yes it's everywhere but the cold part about this battle is you have to do the footwork. Unless, you want the battle to take control of you and you lose to it. Now a lot of us never ask to be placed here on earth but here we are with an everyday struggle. Rather you're behind a wall, in juvie, CYA, jail, prison, the SHU. Or just the plan in society we all have consistence with the battle in our everyday life with people.

And now that we got older in life the battle does not stop. It's not a race but it's a challenge. Most of us all, when you have a job, a job you work so hard for, and it does not pay what you expected to pay. Knowing you know you do not have a lot of money to pay your rent or bills and the food you have to put on the table. let alone that you have to wake up and deal with this battle again once you get back up and step out in society to go to work knowing you have to be on time for work. And guess what? You ended up being late for work and the boss wants to talk to you about him going to have to replace you because of the tardiness to work on several occasions because of the morning rush hour. And you're trying to explain why you were late. so now then he or she gotten the upper hand on you and you get fired and land up in the welfare office looking for some kind of support. Knowing all the years you live in low income, and growing up in the projects, trying to love that place.

You write your book there. having to sell your fancy car such as BMW or what you need to make ends meet. But at the same token you as your own person you can choose your own battle in life.

And now that we got older in life the battle does not stop. It's not a race but it's a challenge.

The Battle For Your Mind

Decision features is one of the most important things in our lives is the control of our minds. Our thoughts are powerful they can harm us or do us good. A person thinks many people have trouble minds because inside their mind they have idols and act out on sexual fantasies for self-gratification. Is it worth it?

I do not know but because of sin it is an enemy of God. So with our very own mind we all need to be very cautious. The way we think and words that come out our mouth, you notice or here someone say. I get a headache. Would you think their mind is running on overtime because they think so hard trying to find a result to what they thinking about because it was the work of the flesh. Some understand and some want to battle for your mind. The tempo of your body and the flesh of this world, which is related to this encouraging activity of demons hatred and fighting jealousy, and anger.

These fuel result impure thought eagerness for lustful pleasure and parties of all that sort of thing I say one day each of us will stand before God one day on all our account ability for our actions before its too late they say the near is end but close anybody know? We all have been alert that are mind so harden that it comes reprobated and the Bible

has warn us against of having this kind of mind the devil blinds our mind in to have a veiled in our mind to have a spiritual truth.

We may have all kinds of unique ways and style and all kinds of disciplines and fields of knowledge but when it comes to spiritual things we don't know anything because we're blinded. But our mind does not want to believe that's why the Holy Spirit has to come and lift the veil. Many people cannot understand it but if they listen to what God puts in there heart and mind they will understand it. Like Proverbs: 3/5/6 "trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on your own understanding and all your acknowledge him and he shall direct your path and let us not forget the Lord by wisdom found the earth that we walk on sit and mostly talk on."

Now were you come to and place to where you desire God you want to be free form all sin and forgiven your spiritual eyes are opened and your mind is freed and Christ can cure our mind from anything and everything the body of their craving of these things that destroy Christ can liberate and change a person mind so with all this said there is a renewed of the mind and do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by renewing of your mind to our loving Lords of Lords and Kings of Kings, Jesus Christ

CURTIS COOK JR.

Curtis Cook Jr. is back and he is free! Yes Curtis is writing and enjoying his freedom and obviously is still a primetime participant in The Beat Within. He writes us from Selma, Alabama and wants to share a few more poems informing you readers out there so you can learn something.

Addiction

For those who don't know me my name is Addiction
 Even before you were conceived in your mother's womb

I was already on my mission

Some seek to study me

But I have become invisible to the sight

Most find me, and keep me to themselves and

Allow me to float through the veins at night

For some I have become a myth in their mind

For most I have become the raw truth, behind the scene of the crime.

I came to attach myself to you

And never let you go

I desire to feast on your inward parts

And ultimately your soul

Fortunately I'm the master of skullduggery

Scholars, and prudent men a like cant get in reach of me

I'll take a young and strong body

And produce the worst of health

I'll take the things you love in life, and exchange it for crystal meth

My friend comes to see me

For your problems

No matter what they might be

You see I have the answer for every problem

Here have some weed

Is if financial heartache

Or a cheating partner, that has gotten you off track

I have the perfect person for this situation

Here try Mr. Crack

Has life gotten down, and it seems everyone has stop caring

Well try my long time doctor

I call him Dr. Heroin

I've seen how people have let you down, and you feel

There's no one you can trust

Well I know this heavenly up right woman, try Mrs. Angel Dust

Has your mental health taken a turn for the worst?

And everything has become tragic

Well I know this brilliant psychiatrist, here try Mr. Acid

Your friends have become strangers

And you're feeling all alone

Well I know this expert entertainer, try Mr. Methadone

My friend there's millions of things

To get addicted to,

To sabotage your mind

My deception screeches for centuries, leaving many blind

So what efforts will you enforce?

Do your next craving

Will you be strong enough to resist the temptation?

Is your life worth saving?

Take Me To College

Tell me what is the key

To your soul

Is it money, is it Gems

Is it riches untold

Tell me what makes your

Heartbeat

Is it blood, is it love

That makes you weak

Take me inside your heart

I'll explore

Every dominion of your

Very existence

You and me is time well

Spent

Teach me to love to care

To open my heart

To share

Teach me to be tolerant

Of others

Teach me to be the lover

Bless me

With every detail of knowledge

Quiz me

Take me to college

Slave-Breaking: Prison is slavery. Plain and simple.

The Emancipation Proclamation openly ended ancient (chattel) slavery but secretly instituted modern-day slavery. In February 1854, the US Congress wrote and voted to adopt the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which said, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

For this reason, I appropriately refer to an inmate or prisoner by his or her proper name: To slave.

One of the most common and widely used forms of the endless tactics of psychological warfare that I see visited upon us slaves is drugs. The irony is that scores of gullible slaves are condemned to slavery for possessing and using illegal drugs that were injected into their community, but once we're in slavery we're forced to take drugs.

In fact, before the mid-1950s, drugs were not used widely in therapy for psychological disorders because the only available sedatives induced sleep as well as calm. Then, the major tranquilizers Reserpine and the Phenoliazines were introduced. The drug that I see most commonly used on slaves in Phenothiazine (trade name: Thorazine).

In addition to alleviating anxiety and aggressive behavior, the drug reduces psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. It is called an anti-psychotic drug. What I see done with this drug is the manipulation of slaves. They are tricked into believing they have a psychological disorder (because they are told by certified psychologist or psychiatrist known as a mental health

Herbert B. Schweigert is writing to us from Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, Mo. Herbert has been a very deep writer for The Beat Within for a while now. He really brings a lot of hard-hitting, thought provoking pieces to our readers, and with that, we are honored to give him the space to share, to teach.

counselor), and they are forced to take this medicine. The effect begins as the slave becomes permanently pacified. But then a problem develops. It is a problem for the slave, but an accomplishment for the oppressor. The slave becomes drug-dependant. They are made zombies in that form. They are compliant. They drift to the explicit command and order of the institution to give us social, occupational or recreational activities.

Also, continued use of the substance in the face of ongoing or recurring physical or psychological problems is likely to make the problems worse (as many times is the case). It is also proven that some drugs have the opposite effect of what was intended. Say a person without anxiety and aggressive behavior is given Thorazine, a drug that is supposed to alleviate these symptoms, what is the outcome?

In my case, I was young and going through the various mental institutions and clinical sessions that I did, and I was given a drug called Ritalin. Ritalin is a psycho-stimulant. It is suppose to heighten alertness and arousal. It and other psycho stimulants were commonly used to treat children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. But it was found that, "strangely in these cases, they have a calming effect rather than a stimulating effect." Other drugs aren't exempt from the characteristics of Ritalin or the side effects. It's a medical known fact that Thorazine destroys one's brain cells. That's one way to break a slave.

Prisons: New Forms Of Environmental Racism.

In the last 40 some years or more the United States has built more prisons than any other country during and period in history. The cost of the US criminal justice system now runs to \$200 billion or more per year. But the financial cost are only part of the story. There are many other costs not so easily seen, costs passed on to the least able to pay them – the poor rural towns in which most prisons are built and the poor urban communities from which most prisoners are sent. Because the costs of the current prison expansion are being passed to the poor, especially to people of color, I say that prisons are examples of economic injustice and environmental racism just to name a few.

What Are Environmental Racism And Environmental Justice?

Environmental racism is racial discrimination in environmental policy making. Selective enforcement of environmental laws, and targeting of communities of color for environmentally disastrous land uses, such as for toxic wastes disposal sites or other polluting industries. Communities of color and poor communities bear an unequal and unfair number of environmentally destructive land uses, land uses that take from the community but don't give back to it.

A study in the late 1980's by the United Church of Christ, for example, found that of 15 million Latinos living in the US, 8 million lived in communities with one or more licensed toxic wastes sites. The environmental justice movement seeks to end such environmental and economical and economic injustices by eliminating the

sitting of environmentally toxic facilities anywhere, along with other newer grass roots organizations since. It's an on going struggle.

Where Are Prisons Located Today?

Throughout the nation nearly all prisons – just like other more traditional forms of environmental racism – are sited in poor, rural communities on a hollow promise of jobs and economic prosperity. Many of these communities are also communities of color. In California, for example, the vast majority of new prisons have been sited on thousands of acres of what was farmland in the Central Valley.

These communities are targeted for prisons much similar communities are targeted for other environmental disastrous industries. A report in the middle 1980's on the sighting of hazardous waste incinerators for example, concluded that communities that would offer the least resistance to the incinerators were small, rural towns whose residents were poor, majority catholic with high school educations or less who worked in jobs like mining, timber or agriculture. California's prison towns' fit this profile precisely and still does.

How Are Prisons Sited?

As if often the case with other environmentally disastrous land uses, communities are shut out of the public review of such proposed prison sites. According to the Encyclopedia of American Prisons: "Site Selection and Construction" p. 447; in an old 1996 issue I'd once read it states "premature disclosure" making siting a prison difficult because the

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public might find out before the details set. Not surprisingly, notice of any public-hearing is poor, if given at all, while intimidation by those pushing for the prison is great.

Another barrier (and there are many) to community participation arises because environmental review documents are provided only in English. In Mendota, CA for example the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) wanted to build a five prison complex awhile back. The FBOP prepared a 100-page Environmental Impact statement in English. According to the Bureau of the census at that time, 86% of the Mendota residents "speak a language other than English" at home when pressed to translate the 100-page document into Spanish, the FBOP made the outrageous claim that translation was not possible because the EIS contained "scientific" and "technical" terms. Finally the FBOP produced an insulting 10 page summary in Spanish.

The environmental justice movement insists that the political process be open and democratic, so that all who might be affected by a project have the full complete information and access to participate in making decisions.

What Are The Environmental Impact Of Prisons?

Public officials often portray prisons as "clean industries" and promise hundreds of decent jobs to economically desperate towns. When in fact, the effects of prisons are almost entirely negative. They suck up scarce local resources such as water; they require towns to pay for roads, sewers and utilities; they generate tens of thousands of miles of community pollution, often in the most polluted parts of the state; they take irreplaceable land out of any productive use, wasting valuable public resources for nothing but holding people in cages. They give almost nothing back to their host communities.

Most prison employees don't come from the host town nor do they move there after being hired; they commute dozens of miles each way. Neither the prison nor it's employees spend much money in the town, so local businesses don't benefit. Despite well known and proven alternatives, prisons take thousands of people out of their communities and families, further impoverishing already hard-hit urban areas. In the communities whose members make up the vast majority of the prison population, families are destroyed and local businesses lose customers and employees. Prisons are environmental and social disasters for the communities from which prisoners come and for the towns in which prisons are built.

Youth Who Are Rebelling Against Society And Why

Many of our children are born oppressed in this world and are being deprived of opportunities to develop into responsible adults. They are being singled out and separated by a process designed to make them self-destruct and simultaneously become a menace to society. Many people say that our youth's behavior is the cause of the toughening crime laws and the growing prison population. If this is true, it could be concluded that we adults are as much to blame for the laws and the increase in the prison population.

It could be said that we just don't understand our youth or we just don't care about the growing numbers of them that are left alone to fend for themselves and to be engulfed by the situation that is threatening a large portion of our youth population. Society's focus should be to save the future of our youth. It's time for us to start speaking up for them, talking to them and ask them to help us understand their

way of life so we can build a bridge of communication and a defense for them from the accusation that they are a menace to society.

They are being excluded from enjoying their dreams here in America. We hand them up like fools as a sacrifice to the government without a fight because our nightmares are recognized through the flesh of those we call our enemies. We should not allow this situation to get any worse. Look at the population of the United States juvenile facilities, jails and the prison population. It reflects our children more and more. We are allowing others to think of us as people who put their children in the hands of the system that steered us into our current system and make it their surrogate parents.

One of the reasons we do this is because we have been conditioned to dismiss our children as just another scene in the tragedy that affects all our lives. It is because of the illusory realities we believe in that we are doing good and getting better of that the plight of our children does not bother us.

The reality is that we are validating our own oppressive state by ignoring the needs of those that are trying to improve themselves and the quality of life for all people even more so for the people of color here in America. We have forced our children to choose their own paths toward self-empowerment, but we are not looking at the reality of whether our children can even reach empowerment relying on themselves. We must help them to choose the right path. This is a process of personal development. If we investigated the reality of what "self-empowerment" is for all people(s) then we would come to the conclusion that we have to deconstruct their and our current mindsets. We have to reconstruct a mindset focused on getting the building process started.

Lastly, we must construct a constant elevation of self-empowerment for all to embrace without any having to sacrifice anyone. Our children are not bad people. They have simply never been taught how to control their behavior and to get the best out of life with less bumps and bruises. We must take into account that they, especially those who never received nurturing guidance from their parents or other adults, may develop psychological problems as adults that are caused by mixed cultural, psycho-emotional, and sociopolitical factors. All of us adults must take the time to raise our children.

America is the only nation of people that does not take the appropriate time to raise our children. Our communities have been seduced into assuming that our children can survive on their own. This type of thinking has been the cause of our children's development of anti-social values that keep them at odds with every structure here in America.

Outside of life at home, both parents and children are subjected to an engineering that fosters scorn of each other, without a heart for helping each other correct ourselves. Our love and concern for each other has been misplaced. During olden times the love and concern we had for each other helped us to correct our behavior. It created a mode of behavior in which we are only loved by our families. These values were passed on to other generations, and the process was repeated. The older generation was not bad, it was just in need of community education on social and political issues.

When the older generation cried out for help by committing destructive behavior and crime, it was done so because it lacked social and political educations. The community ignored them until they started to affect the

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economy and the social elite, which has always manipulated our community through their media. They have type cast us all as aggressive people and gang bangers mafias. This has kept the generations before them from entitling us human compassion.

It is not strange to see today's generation calling each other honkies, pigs, ninjas, dogs, thugs, hoodrats, chicken heads, white trash and many other previously derogatory descriptions. Most of this generation has not received an education that fosters a higher degree of understanding and produces a higher destiny for themselves that isn't defined and dictated by the corrupt U.S. government oppressors we live under. Far too many of our youths are not learning this easy lesson until they reach an age where they can only imagine what they could have accomplished with their youth.

Why is it that trillions of tax dollars are diverted away from this future generation's education and social service budget? This generation has been cut off by our government, and it is only causing more and more dysfunctional behavior and creating a class doomed to incarceration drug addictions or an early death. This is the form of persecution that is being used to kill the spirit and the body of this generation and all the future generations. But what is killing this generation even more is that as bad as our enemies may be, they are not as bad as we are to each other. Could it be the fear factor, checkmate they got us in, making us too scared to rise up against them, so we just use, hurt, and kill each other, instead?

We're like fools keep falling for the same tricks. We have very little self-control, and we have been remade through an image of us physically, mentally, spiritually, and economically. The world climate of past generations was much different than that faced by this generation. Those who lead this country understand how this scenario developed and use it to keep themselves in power. But our generation has a strong will and the determination to rise up and be successful. Our downfall hasn't been in the desire for self-empowerment but in the choices made to act upon it.

We must encourage our youth to choose well and help them understand the choices they have made. If we could take more of a collective, interest in each other both middle and lower class peoples of all races and creeds, this would be more valuable to us than all the schools the United States has to offer. It is time for us as a people to come together as one and help this generation by giving them a better sense of direction and the ability to be a positive influence on others of their generation.

It is time to start giving them our time so they will understand how much their time means to us and giving them our love. We need the next generation to be better than this generation and so on with each generation to follow. If we do not start doing what we can now, then we could become the problem we are trying to address, and one day we will be faced with the same problems from the generation that we refused to help. We all have to unite, middle and lower class, we have to rally and fight together... What's the worst that could happen that hasn't already happened to us. Get fired from your jobs?

You have the worst jobs anyway working to make the rich richer. They burn crosses on your lawns, burn your houses down call you spicks, niggers, and white trash. All that has happened to us before. Small groups are acting out but they're either being murdered or imprisoned. We can be a force to reckon with if we all come and stand together to keep speaking out say enough is enough we ain't gonna

put up with it no more, to make sure it doesn't happen to us again, or our children and their children's children will never be safe from this corrupt U.S. system.

Excerpts

"The people need to resist and end this illegal war in Iraq to prevent any further war crimes our government is forcing us to commit for them. Killing and bombing civilians is an illegal is criminal. Ending it is not. Not in God's eyes and he's the one we need to be concerned with, and his judgement for your murders." Won't be no apologies or plea bargains then!

"Liberty without socialism is inequality and injustice
Socialism without liberty is brutality and slavery."

"It wasn't the nails in Jesus' hands and feet that kept him on the cross, no it was his love for us that kept him there."

"Capitalism has always relied on slavery. In the beginning, it was the Africans and the indigenous populations that labored in captivity. Later, the urban and rural poor, and today's slaves are the government's prisoners. The modern plantation is the so called center for corrections."

"Prison serves many purposes. It houses the people you don't want, the people your scared of, the people who fight you or a corrupt system, the people who need to be eliminated or controlled and you make a big money business out of it. And there's no alternatives. Every study they've ever done over the last 30 years or more, tells them that alternatives cost less, are more successful, are more humane, are reflections of a more caring society. They know prisons don't work except to break peoples backs, break them down mentally, emotionally, and spiritually and to turn pettie thieves into murderers. Prisons only breed bitterness. But our corrupt government and corrupt law enforcement and judicial system as well as the ruling class don't give a shit about these things. If they did we wouldn't be in this cesspool mess."

"Conventional wisdom would have one believe that it is insane to resist this, the so called mightiest of empires... But what history really shows is that today's empire is tomorrow's ashes, that nothing lasts forever, and that to not resist is to acquiesce in your own oppression, the greatest form of sanity that anyone can exercise is to resist that force that is trying to repress, oppress, and to fight down the human spirit."

" The people, once united will never be defeated, they have learned that resistance, allied resistance is actually possible. The holds are beginning to slip away."

Wisdom!

I'd written up an article titled-"PEACE IS PATRIOTIC AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM" which relates to the war on Iraq and the war on the poor which I'm sure you'll enjoy, I tell it like it is, I'll fight and die for my beliefs if necessary. I'd sent this article out to my lady friend sister Vicki in Texas she's supposed to be sending you folks a copy of it soon as she gets typed up. I'm white but I'm not racist, except towards racist people, and this racist corrupt U.S. government, and others more powerful.

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I grew up in the inner city ghetto slums that were only 2% white neighborhoods. I've been around Blacks and Hispanics all my life and would have it no other way. I know for a fact Hillary Clinton is gonna win the presidency but sure wish it were Obama or even the Mexican, but they'd probably only get assassinated.

The Bilderbergers, Hughs, and the Illuminati (secret societies) that many people don't even know exist, wants Hillary in and they run all this. Her husband has blood that are apart of this secret society, there has almost never been a president elected into the United States government that wasn't a member of the secret societies, such as Skull and Bones, Masons, Trilateral Commission, Commission on Foreign Relations or a member of the Bilderbergers.

You'll never hear about Trillionaires but they do exists! The Rockefeller and Rothschild dynasties have more accumulated wealth than can be calculated. They own the two largest banks in the world. Chase Manhattan and World Bank this is not to mention the untold real estate portfolios, oil and insurance companies. These are but only two of the 10 richest families in the world that run the world.

I'm gonna do an article one these issues also but in a religious sense Revelations refers to these as the 10 horns and they have funded every war that has taken place on this planet both sides us and our enemies. Taxes are not even legal according to the constitution, the FDICC which is taken out of your paycheck each week, is not even associated with the Federal Gov.

America needs to wake up. Hillary will do as she is told to do that's one of the main reasons they want her in that position as U.S. president. If you get a Republican, you get an Illuminati member and if you get a Democrat you still get one. Your vote doesn't count one iota. Not one! Mammon controls politics. As they say whoever owns the property owns the monopoly board, owns the pieces everything even us. Taxation without representation is what started this mess to begin with.

Get on the internet and do some research into the dreaded UCC (Uniform Commercial Code!). You've never seen and never will see classes in UCC try and find out what it is. Even in prison it is feared that if men are ride outs, confiscation of the materials is a form of retaliation. They rule us we are their servants (slaves). Who do you work for and whom do you owe?

Debt is manufacture. It is not natural. I'm just a nobody convict I'm not supposed to know these things and as long as certain special societies keep thinking I don't, I'll be around longer. How many Christian Bankers do you know? And if none, why not? Come out of Babylon my children, the 10 horns of the secret societies is the anti-Christ and his co-harts.

Who are you serving, the Lord or Mammon? I pray that the God of Peace grants each of you wisdom in all things. Friends wisdom is the principle thing, in all thy getting, get understanding! (Proverbs 4:7)

"Prison serves many purposes. It houses the people you don't want, the people your scared of, the people who fight you or a corrupt system..."

GERI VANCE

Gerl Vance is writing from CSP in Calipatria, California. Gerl wants to share a quick poem with all you readers out there. So give a moment of your time and soak some of this knowledge in your brain.

The Brood

I speak what my heart sense, so judge the intent
Pitch my tent amongst the chimps within the splintered
picket fence
For my relent was what it meant, to bring offense and to
offend
And to avenge what they amend against the brood within
the dew
Can one contend, against what won't rescind because
it's cup had peaked at brim
So remote to reach it's end will cause it's potenance to
go malign
For the woes of me sits in the layer of skin beneath
them
The chance is none to slim of one of us becoming them
For it's origins are of the concubines that cluster to the
roof
Offered in a basket of moth bitted fruit
Dilutes its absolute into a hymn of the flute
It's affliction self induced if it convinces it to stoop



It has been 10 years since I knew of this publication and it has been an honor and a privilege to know you all. In a huge way my printed expressions have helped me grow and see who I am, and you all have helped me grow and see who I am and you all have helped me become a man just by your support and free publication. For that I am in great debt for your time.

read the rest of Jeremy Towner's BWO piece on page 55

